

People Panel

Date: Thursday, 12 January 2023

Time: 10:08

Venue: Flensburg Room

Present: Councillor Mrs Christine Finlayson, Councillor Colin Glover, Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell, Councillor Mrs Linda Mitchell, Councillor Tim Pickstone, Councillor David Shepherd, Councillor Christopher Wills
Councillor Pamela Birks (for Councillor Miss Jeanette Whalen)

Also Present: Councillor Mrs Bowman - Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Mallinson - Communities, Health and Wellbeing

Officers: Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Head of Property Services
Head of Human Resources
Chief Executive's Office Manager
Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Mr Barry and Ms Todd, Youth Participation Officers, Cumbria County Council

PEP.01/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Miss Jeanette Whalen.

PEP.02/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

PEP.03/23 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - That items in Part A be dealt with in public and items in private be dealt with in Part B.

PEP.04/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - . It was noted that Council, at its meeting of 3 January 2023, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022. The Chair signed the minutes.

PEP.05/23 AGENDA

RESOLVED - That item A.7 - Internal Audit Report - Sustainable Warmth Grant be considered following item A.4 - Corporate Risk Register & Local Government Review (LGR) Transition.

PEP.06/23 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been subject of call in.

PEP.07/23 YOUTH PROJECTS AND ENGAGEMENT

The Chair welcomed Mr Barry and Ms Todd to the meeting; they delivered a presentation covering: the national, regional and local partnerships Cumbria Youth Participation engaged with; and overview of the structure of the team following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR); Cumbria Participation Framework; the '7 Golden Rules' a set of principles for those working with and for children and young people; ongoing activity; work focused on health and wellbeing; and the Youth Inspection Programme.

In considering the presentation and report Members raised the following questions and comments:

- What age range did the Youth Participation Service work with?

Mr Barry responded that the service worked with 11 to 19 year olds, adding that it had the capacity to work with older juniors.

- Once LGR had been completed, was there a mechanism for young people to influence matters that remained on a Cumbria wide footprint

Mr Barry advised that each new unitary council would have a corresponding Youth Council which would hold joint meetings with its counter-part, providing a forum for the discussion of county wide matters.

Ms Todd added that currently the service was divided into teams covering particular geographical areas. As such joint working was already an aspect of the team's approach to service delivery, she anticipated such an approach would continue once the new unitary councils were in operation.

- What level of engagement did young people have with the service?

Mr Barry advised that levels varied depending on the type of work e.g. whether an event or a project, it was important that young people were engaged with in a manner that was appropriate to their individual stage of development.

Mr Barry gave an overview of methods used to identify priority issues for young people, including a referendum at the National Youth Council in which approximately 1,000 young people had participated where jobs and homes have been identified as an important issue along with health and wellbeing.

Moreover, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic had increased remote working with young people that had enabled the service to engage more widely with young people. Face to face engagement had now returned with monthly meetings at Carlisle Youth Zone.

The Panel discussed with the Participation Officers opportunities for young people to participate in consultations the Council was conducting, for example in relation to the Re-imagining The Green Market / Castle Street and the St Cuthbert's Village Deign Code.

Ms Todd responded that the service undertook a lot of consultation work with young people and so were used to facilitating such activity.

Mr Barry noted that the service had been involved in supporting young people, to participate in the consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP), he was confident that support would be able to be provided to engage in the consultations identified by the Panel.

A Member noted that Cumberland Council was to set up a number of Local Community Panels and suggested that they provide an opportunity for young people to engage in civic life.

The Health, Wellbeing and Communities Portfolio Holder noted that the County Council's Local Committees had an element of youth engagement, and it was hoped that such provision would be continued at Cumberland Council.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the support and outcomes for young people transitioning towards adulthood, the Participation Officers gave examples of how individuals had progressed from their experience of engaging with the Youth Participation Service and others such as the Cumbria Future Leader's programme.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation which had underlined the importance of youth participation.

RESOLVED – 1) That report CS.37/22 be noted.

2) That the Policy and Scrutiny Officer forward information from the current and previous meeting where the Panel had discussed issues relating to young people to the relevant Portfolio Holder at Cumberland Council.

3) That the Panel request that the Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder through her work emphasise the importance of continuing youth participation work following Local Government Reorganisation.

4) That the topic be included in the Panel's section of the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23.

PEP.08/23 CORPORATE PROJECT STATUS REPORT

The Chief Executive's Office Manager submitted the Corporate Projects Status Report (CE 01/23). The report provided an up to date snapshot of the current status of the City Council's corporate level projects; recent activity; RAG rating; issues and emerging risk; key activities for the next period; and updated requests for change.

In considering the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

- The Chair asked whether Officers had received an update from DLUHC regarding the Carlisle Southern Link Road; and if that information was pending, how had the St Cuthbert's Garden Village – Carlisle South Masterplan project been given a green RAG rating?

The Chief Executive's Office Manager undertook to provide a written response to the Panel.

- In relation to project 4 – Asset Recovery Programme, a Member asked if the health

and safety actions regarding access and egress the civic centre had been actioned.

The Chief Executive's Office Manager undertook to provide a written response to the Panel.

- Regarding the Sands Centre Redevelopment, the Chair sought clarification that the amber RAG rating for the project was as a result of 'the condition of existing services in the arts and entertainment space. He further asked whether there were plans to renovate the arts and entertainment space and, where that to happen, would that resolve the identified risks?

The Chief Executive's Office Manager undertook to provide a written response to the Panel.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the transfer of GLL staff from The Pools site to the Sands Centre, the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services understood that a report on the matter was to be submitted to a future meeting of both Executive and Council.

- Regarding accountability in the One Public Estate project would the two new unitary authorities work together on the matter?

The Chief Executive's Office Manager undertook to provide a written response to the Panel.

- The Chair noted the return of monies to BEIS from the Sustainable Warmth Grants project and asked whether it was likely further funds would need to be returned?

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services confirmed that in autumn 2022, a sum had been returned based on a calculation by BEIS. It would be for BEIS to advise whether it required the return of more funds in the future.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Corporate Projects Status Report (CE.01/13) be noted.

2) That the Chief Executive's Office Manager provide written responses to the Panel regarding whether:

- i) Officers had received an update from DLUHC regarding the Carlisle Southern Link Road; and if that information was pending, how had the St Cuthbert's Garden Village – Carlisle South Masterplan project been given a green RAG rating;
- ii) The health and safety actions regarding access and egress the civic centre had been actioned;
- iii) The amber RAG rating for the Sands Centre project was as a result of 'the condition of existing services in the arts and entertainment space;
- iv) There were plans to move into a new arts and entertainment space and, where that to happen, would that resolve the identified risks with the Sands Centre Redevelopment project;
- v) The two new unitary councils would work together regarding accountability for the One Public Estate project.

PEP.09/23 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER & LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW (LGR) TRANSITION

The Chief Executive's Office Manager submitted report CS.02/23 which provided an update on the management of the City Council's Corporate Risk Register and covered the arrangements for the transition of such risks to Cumberland

Council. She gave an overview of the inclusion of the Sustainable Warmth project into the Register and the recording of mitigating actions taken to date. In relation to the transition to Cumberland Council, the Office Manager stated the need for a unified Risk Register, and appropriate training for Officers going forward.

In considering the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

- A Member expressed concern that a Corporate Risk Register for Cumberland Council had not yet been created. With reference to the red RAG rating on the City Council's IT service, he sought assurance that there would be no disruption to IT service following the transition.

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services explained that as part of the Local Government Reorganisation process workstreams had been set up in individual services areas, such as IT to manage the transition process and ensure continuous service delivery.

- The Chair sought clarification on the membership of the Risk Management Sub-Group and whether the risk for Cumberland Council would be identified by its first day.

The Chief Executive's Office Manager responded that she chaired the Sub-Group which comprised following Officers: the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services; the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources; the Safety, Health and Environment Manager; a representative from the Council's insurance team. The Group would continue to meet in the run up to local government transition and a written record, in the form of minutes was produced.

- The Chair asked whether the sectional completion of the Sands Centre Redevelopment project had been achieved?

The Corporate Director confirmed that it had.

- The Chair asked whether there had been any progress on the re-procurement of contract by Homes England in respect of the Carlisle Southern Link Road project?

The Chief Executive's Office Manager undertook to provide a written response to the Panel.

- Why had the Sustainable Warmth Grants project not been included in the Corporate Risk Register earlier when it was clear that there were issues with the delivery of the project?

The Corporate Director acknowledged that the project ought to have been included in the Register at an earlier stage. It was added to the register as soon as it became apparent that there were issues.

- The Chair noted a couple of sites in important locations in the city centre: the Central Plaza and the Turkish Baths; he asked why they were not listed on the Council's Risk Register?

The Corporate Director explained that those sites had not been included on the Corporate Risk Register as they were not within the ownership of the City Council (the Turkish Baths were to be transferred to Cumbria County Council as part of the

Borderland's Station Gateway Project). However, he understood that they were listed in the Economic Development team's Risk Register, and that the team had a campaign to increase interest in the site. The Chief Executive's Office Manager undertook to investigate whether those sites were on the Economic Development team's Risk Register and provide a written response to the Panel.

In response to a further question from the Chair regarding the inclusion of the city wall on the Risk Register, the Corporate Director confirmed it was.

- A Member commented that she had understood, in relation to the demolition of The Pools site, the existing boiler and outbuilding were to be retained for the Turkish Baths.

The Head of Property Services responded that the intention was for the Turkish Baths to have its own boiler system as the site would be smaller.

The Panel discussed the ongoing maintenance of assets and the transfer of that liability to Cumberland Council.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Panel had scrutinised the Corporate Risk Register as set out in Appendix 1.

2) That the Panel had noted the arrangements for the transfer of risk to Cumberland Council.

3) That the Chief Executive's Office Manager provide a written responses regarding:
i) the progress of Homes England Re-Procurement of the contract in respect of the Carlisle Southern Link Road;
ii) the inclusion of the Central Plaza and Turkish Bath sites on the Economic Development team's Risk Register.

PEP.10/23 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - SUSTAINABLE WARMTH GRANT

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services submitted report GD.02/23. At its meeting of 8 December 2022, the City Council's Audit Committee had considered Internal Audit Report - Sustainable Warmth Grant and had resolved to refer the matter to the People Panel for consideration and review.

The Corporate Director set out in depth the background to project covering: the allocation of government funding; the issues that had been identified with the project delivery and the actions taken to address this; and the restructuring of the management of the team, along with recruitment of additional staff. Following the implementation of those measures, the backlog of applications had been significantly reduced and by in large the project was in the implementation phase.

The Council was working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Head of Property Services noted that the BEIS seemed confident in the Council's current approach to delivering the project. The deadline for the completion of the project was 30 April 2023, a request had been made to extend that deadline by six months and a decision on this is imminent. It was known that other local authorities had also encountered issues in delivering their Sustainable Warmth Grants projects and it understood that BEIS was considering those matters to inform its design and delivery of future grant funding projects.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio advised that, following the identification of issues with the project she had been keeping a close eye on the matter and was being kept informed of progress by Officers.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their update and indicated he wished the Panel to focus on the future delivery of the project.

In considering the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Had the initial timescale for project delivery, set by BEIS been realistic and was BEIS dealing with authorities who were having issues collectively or individually?

The Corporate Director responded that the Council was having regular meetings with BEIS individually. The more involved contact had arisen after issues with the spend profile of the project had been identified, he reiterated that BEIS seemed satisfied with the approach the Council was now taking.

The project had received £19.5M of funding and the Council would do its best to deliver the project as it would benefit households in the district.

The Head of Property Services noted that a large focus of the project was now the performance of contractors who were delivering the works to ensure a consistent standard of works and delivery. The Council was waiting to hear whether it would be allowed a six month extension to deliver the project.

The Member was reassured by the Officer's responses and considered that the issues had been well dealt with.

- A Member asked what level of spend had been achieved on the project thus far.

The Corporate Director stated that the maximum grant given to a household was £25,000. He did not have firm figures on the spend to date to hand, that information would be collated in advance of the Council's next meeting with BEIS, he undertook to circulate that detail to the Panel.

- Would the issues with the project affect the Council's capacity to secure future government funding?

The Corporate Director advised that due to Local Government Reorganisation, Carlisle City Council would not be seeking future government funding. He reminded the Panel that the Council had a good track record of applying for and delivering projects funded by government. It was understood that a further round of BEIS funding would be available to bid for in the coming financial year, were a bid to be put forward another district council would act in the role of lead authority.

The Panel discussed the procurement of contractors to generate leads and deliver works. The Corporate Director noted that there had been some cross over on the generation of leads as the delivery company had engaged in some of that work, the matter had been addressed by the Head of Property Services.

- Did the project have the capacity to receive new applications, and what would be the impact of not receiving an extension to the project deadline?

The Head of Property Services explained that a lot of marketing of the project had been carried out in 2022, at the current time it was still open to applications. A cut-off date for applications had been set for later in the month to ensure that the Council had time to deliver the grants which had been approved, in the event of an extension not being granted.

A further iteration of the scheme was expected to operate in the next financial year, were Members to know of any residents in their ward how may benefit from the scheme it may be worth bringing to their attention so that they may submit an application to the future scheme.

- What was the timescale from the receipt of application to the completion of works? The Head of Property Services replied that once an application had been deemed as eligible an initial property survey was carried out and recommendations for works passed to the contractor who would deliver the works. The contractor then undertook their own survey to determine the specification of works, once agreed the works were carried out. Given the varying conditions of properties and prescribed works, the time taken from application to implementation varied. The team were monitoring implementation to identify any blockages so that they may be addressed.

- Was the Council able through it contracts to apply financial penalties to any underperforming contractor?

The Head of Property Services advised that the Council was focused on performance at the current time, it had not yet begun to consider recovery.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their openness in responding to the Panel's questions and concerns. The discussion had been helpful, and he had confidence that the managers and the Portfolio Holder now having strong oversight of the project and would do their best to deliver the project.

RESOLVED 1) That the Internal Audit Report - Sustainable Warmth Grant report (GD.02/23) had been scrutinised.

2) That key steps and updates in relation to the Sustainable Warmth Grants project be communicated to Members.

3) That a position statement on the Sustainable Warmth Grants project be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

4) That the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services circulate to the Panel details of the project spend to date, following the upcoming meeting with BEIS.

PEP.11/23 LGR - SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND ASSURANCE ON PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of Human Resources submitted report RD.55/22 LGR - Support for Staff and Assurance On Proposed Arrangements, which provided an overview of the support available to staff during Local Government Reorganisation which would take effect on 1 April 2023.

In considering the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Were vacancy rates higher than average levels?

The Head of Human Resources advised that in some of the sovereign authorities (the existing district and county councils) there is an increase in the vacancy rate, principally in senior management level posts, however, that was not the case for Carlisle City Council. She added that there had been a rise in fixed term contract positions, but that managers were being encouraged to offer permanent contracts.

Responding to a further question from the Member as to whether staff would be able to know who their line manager was, the Head of Human Resources set out the process in relation to staff transfer (TUPE) and the appointment of Directors and Assistant Directors and the sequential order in which activity would take place. Once the appointment of Assistant Directors had taken place, work on detailed structure charts would take place which would set out lines of management at the two new unitary authorities. A specific HR / Organisational Development Workstream was in place to manage and deliver those processes.

A Member commented that there would be some uncertainty for staff.

In response the Head of Human Resources advised that for the majority of staff there would be no fundamental change on Day 1. A Management of Change policy was currently being developed and following Vesting Day a transformation process would take place.

- Was there any indication that staff were leaving due to LGR?

The Head of Human Resources replied that the City Council did not appear to be affected to the same extent by that issue as other sovereign councils were.

The Head of Human Resources, following a question from a Member regarding the number of staff appraisals that had taken place in the preceding year, undertook to provide a written response on the matter.

The Chair noted that within the Council there were currently a high proportion of Officers effectively doing two jobs as they were involved in the work of the Shadow Authority. It was evident that workloads were increasing, what were staff able to do to support their mental health during this period.

The Head of Human Resources replied that staff were able to discuss issues with their line manager, to request for workloads to be looked at.

The Chair noted that the Council had a good track record of supporting staff's mental health, he asked whether such an approach may be adopted by Cumberland Council?

The HR / OD workstream were looking into the matter, and the support afforded to Carlisle City Council staff was viewed positively. It was expected that the current provision would continue for 12 months to enable Cumberland to develop and implement its on approach.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report.

RESOLVED – That the People Panel:

1) Recognise the support provided by the City Council to staff for health and

wellbeing activities and encouraged the carrying forward of such activities to Cumberland Council.

2) Recognise the pressure staff were working under, and request that Directors and line managers do all they can to support staff.

PEP.12/23 COST OF LIVING TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submitted the final report of the Cost Of Living Task and Finish Group (OS.01/23). The report set out the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to the People Panel.

Councillor Wills, Chair of the Task and Finish Group gave an overview of the work which had been undertaken.

A Member noted that in its early stages the Task and Finish Group's had been keen to produce a directory of resources for those who were affected by the Cost of Living crisis. Councillor Wills advised that Cumbria County Council was on with that work.

The Chair drew Members' attention to the report recommendations which were set out on pages 102 – 103 of the document pack.

RESOLVED – 1) That the People Panel supported the recommendation of the Cost of Living Task and Finish Group as set out in report OS.01/23.

2) That any responses to the recommendations of the Cost of Living Task and finish Group be co-ordinated by the Policy and Scrutiny Officer.

3) That report OS.01/23 be forwarded to: the relevant Scrutiny Panel Chair at Cumberland Council; the relevant Portfolio Holder at Cumberland Council; the Chair of Cumbria County Council's People Panel; and relevant MPs.

4) That thanks be given to the Members and Officers who had taken part in the Task and Finish Group's work, and in particular the Policy and Scrutiny Officer who had provided excellent support to the Group.

PEP.13/23 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.04/23 which gave an overview of matters related to the Panel's work.

In considering the Panel's Work Programme, the Chair requested that an additional item – Update on Sustainable Warmth Grants be added to the agenda for the meeting of 23 February 2023.

RESOLVED 1) That the Overview Report be noted.

2) That an update report on the Sustainable Warmth Grants be added to the agenda for the meeting of 23 February 2023.

The Meeting ended at: 13:37