

ALSO PRESENT :

Mr P Cretney (BT Project Manager, Connecting Cumbria)
Mr J Harris (Senior Project Manager, Connecting Cumbria)
Ms R Rooney (Democratic Services Officer, Carlisle City Council)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the first tripartite meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs E Martlew, Mrs J Riddle and Ms A Quilter (Carlisle City Council)
Mrs J Meek (Director of Economic Development, Carlisle City Council)
Councillor K McIntosh (Cummersdale Parish Council)
Councillor B Craig (Dalston Parish Council)
Councillor M Ridley (Irthington Parish Council)
Councillor W Bundred (Kirkandrews on Esk Parish Council)
Councillor J Harper (Rockcliffe Parish Council)
Councillor L Thompson (Scaleby Parish Council)
Councillor J Evans (Walton Parish Council)
Mrs S Kyle (Walton Parish Clerk)

3. NEW FORMAT TRIPARTITE MEETINGS

The Chairman asked that consideration be given to the future meeting dates, venues and hosts of the Tripartite Meetings and that the next meeting take place in the spring before the Election in May 2015.

RESOLVED – That the arrangements for the next meeting be made by officers from Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Association of Local Councils.

4. AGENDA

RESOLVED - That agenda item 5 Connecting Cumbria be considered as the first item on the agenda followed by the briefing notes on the Parish Charter and the Local Plan.

5. CONNECTING CUMBRIA

The Chairman welcomed Mr Harris, Senior Project Manager, Connecting Cumbria and Mr Cretney, BT Project Manager, Connecting Cumbria to the meeting.

Mr Harris thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to provide an update on the Connecting Cumbria Project. He explained that he had joined the team on 22 September and was still familiarising himself with a complicated but well delivered project. He gave an outline of the project which aimed to deliver superfast broadband to residents, businesses and visitors across Cumbria as quickly as possible with the funds available.

Mr Cretney explained that the first stage of the project began in October 2013 and involved 106 exchanges, 700 new green cabinets and over 4,000 kilometres of cabling. In the first year the schedule rolled out superfast broadband to 55,000 premises from 226 green

cabinets, this was over 60% of the County. He added that Connecting Cumbria were working hard to keep to the schedule and they were currently on target.

He stressed that the superfast broadband had to be ordered through providers, customers did not automatically receive the broadband, it had to be purchased. The broadband had been installed through the Open Reach Network and so did not have to be purchased through BT, customers were able to shop around for the most suitable deal for them.

Mr Cretney outlined some data for Carlisle which included 121 cabinets in Carlisle with 33,400 premises completed and a further 500 more premises to be added. Brampton had 10 cabinets and 2,100 premises completed, Dalston had 5 cabinets and 300 premises completed and Longtown had 1 cabinet. He gave details of the next stage would involve further cabinets being added to Carlisle and its surrounding area and the number of premises which would be completed with each cabinet.

He explained that the planning for the easier areas had been completed first so that the engineers could begin their work and then the planning for the more outlying and difficult to reach areas could begin. He gave an overview of the options available for more rural areas.

Mr Harris reassured Members that the work would continue after the completion of stage 1 and it was hoped that the target for coverage could be extended from the current target of 93% to 95% with some additional funding. He added that any income from the broadband installation would be reinvested in the project.

Parish Councillors asked questions with regard broadband in their parishes and Mr Cretney gave details of the options available to areas where a cabinet was not suitable. He added that technology was changing all the time and new technology was becoming available for hard to reach areas.

Councillor Holland asked that the County Council website be updated on a regular basis as Parishes had found it frustrating when trying to locate information for their areas.

Mr Harris responded that the Connecting Cumbria website was up to date and had postcode checker and telephone number checker facilities for specific areas.

Mr Cretney explained that the uptake on the superfast broad band was increasing and had doubled in the last four months. The current take up was approximately 1 in 8 and the target was 1 in 5.

RESOLVED – That Mr Harris and Mr Chetney be thanked for their informative update on Connecting Cumbria.

6. UPDATES / BRIEFINGS FROM THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE COUNTY COUNCIL

(a) Parish Charter

The Planning Manager (Carlisle City Council) reported that officers were working with the Carlisle Parish Councils Association (CPCA) to finalise the Parish Charter. He felt that the finalisation of the Planning Working Agreement within the Parish Charter would benefit greatly from a meeting between Carlisle City Council Members and representatives of the

Carlisle Parish Councils Association. This would allow the both parties to better understand what was best for each aspect of the agreement.

Councillor Nicholson, representative of the CPCA and Councillor Glover agreed that a meeting would be beneficial to ensure that the Parish Charter was a robust document which could be adopted by all relevant partners.

(b) Local Plan Update

The Development Manager (Carlisle City Council) circulated an update on the Local Plan. He explained that the current stage was the last stage before the Local Plan went to the Secretary of State for consideration. The Local Plan was being taken through the City Council's committee process and approval would be sought by Council on 10 February. He stressed that the next stage of consultation differed from previous stages as there would be no flexibility to the response dates.

The Chairman commented that he had been pleased with the level of responses given by Parish Councils and the specific response from the CPCA which asked the Council to consider the recent adoption of policy by Allerdale Borough Council regarding the distance of 800m for the consideration of Wind Turbines in relation to existing residential properties.

In response to a question the Planning Manager explained that the minimum size for wind turbines was 25m and the Allerdale Policy was aimed at the larger turbines.

7. CARLISLE METRO WIFI PROJECT AND FUTURE DIGITAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Deputy Chief Executive (Carlisle City Council) reported that the City Centre free wi-fi service had been officially launched. He reminded Members that the City Council had been working for approximately 12-13 months to launch the service, initially procuring a partner then installing the necessary equipment.

The service had been available since mid October and had 4,447 different people who had logged onto the service before any advertisement had been carried out. The wi-fi covered the City Centre from the Railway Station to the Civic Centre, Devonshire Street, Bank Street, some of Lowther Street, Tullie House and the play area in Bitts Park. There was also coverage in the centre of Longtown and Brampton. There was no restriction on the usage but it was an open air system which meant users would lose connections when they entered a building.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that it was hoped that the wi-fi would encourage social media use regarding Carlisle and increase activity on the Discover Carlisle website. There would be an opportunity for local business and accommodation to promote their business and the City.

Marketing was being undertaken which would include news releases and advertisement, banners, and the use of Carlisle Focus and Carlisle Living. The development of the wi-fi service would include work with the University of Cumbria, local retailers and tourism sites such as Hadrian's Wall and Talkin Tarn.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chief Executive and the consultants involved in the process for their hard work in ensuring Carlisle received the service and met the required timescales.

RESOLVED – 1) That the update on the Carlisle Wi-Fi project be welcomed;

2) That the Deputy Chief Executive and relevant consultants be thanked for their dedication and hard work in developing and delivering the free wi-fi service in Carlisle.

8. POTENTIAL FOR ENERGY MINERAL EXPLORATION IN CUMBRIA

The Planning Services Manager (Cumbria County Council) gave a presentation on the potential for energy mineral exploration in Cumbria Parishes.

The Planning Services Manager began by summarising the national context, commenting upon:

- new technological advances (“fracking”);
- the British Geological Survey;
- DECC/Coal Authority licensing; and
- PEDL 14th Round (closed on 28 October 2014 – outcome early 2015)

He further outlined in some detail the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014), and the Cumbria M&W Local Plan; the schematic geology of natural gas resources / process and the environmental risks from shale gas extractions; together with associated licensing issues.

In conclusion, the Planning Services Manager explained the future outlook for hydrocarbons in Cumbria and signposted a number of information sources which Parishes may find useful.

Copies of the presentation were tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Nicholson, representative of the CPCA, asked that the County Highways Agency were vigilant in protecting communities from heavy goods vehicles which were used as transportation to and from the energy exploration sites and ensure that the water used for the process did not deplete water sources. He also raised concerns regarding the links between ‘fracking’ and seismic activities.

The Planning Services Manager responded that the environmental implications of any licences were investigated and consulted on thoroughly.

Councillor G Routledge raised concerns that some areas were not connected to main gas lines yet gas was being drilled for in those areas and sent elsewhere.

The Planning Services Manager agreed that some rural areas did not have mains gas despite gas being produced in the area. He felt that energy sources could be beneficial for rural areas and arrangements could be reached which was to the advantage of rural areas.

The Chairman thanked the Planning Services Manager for his very interesting and informative presentation.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

9. UPDATES / BRIEFINGS FROM THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE COUNTY COUNCIL

(a) Devolving Services

Councillor Moorat asked that consideration be given to devolving services from the County Council and City Council to Parish Councils. He gave an example of a service where he felt the Parish could provide a more efficient cost effective service than the City Council.

Councillor Weber welcomed ways in which to reduce the budget for both the County and City Councils as they both faced substantial reductions to their budgets.

The Area Manager – Carlisle referred to the Cumbria County Council Budget Consultation document which had been circulated and encouraged Members to respond to this. Section 3 asked questions regarding new ways of working and he suggested that parishes complete that section of the consultation with any ideas for devolved working.

Councillor Glover agreed that devolution needed to be considered in areas closest to the communities and there had been successful working in the past. He urged Parishes to bring ideas for potential changes to the Council and they would be considered seriously.

(b) Hadrian's Wall

A briefing note regarding Hadrian's Wall was circulated to Members.

Councillor Fox raised concerns that the management of Hadrian's Wall had drifted to Northumbria in a significant way. He asked if there were some contacts available so that local groups could work together. He also asked if there were any resources available to promote Hadrian's Wall and he wanted to know where the electric bicycles were that the Hadrian's Wall Trust had bought.

The Area Manager – Carlisle highlighted the County Council's budget consultation document informing Members that the County Council was proposing to withdraw funding from the Hadrian's Wall Trust. He stressed that the County Council supported the work of the Trust and valued the heritage but they had to take some difficult decisions which included the withdrawal of funding.

Councillor Glover informed the meeting that he had received a letter asking for senior management representation from the City Council on the new working group and this would be actioned. He agreed that groups must work together to ensure Hadrian's Wall is maintained and promoted throughout the County.

Councillor Moorat also raised concerns regarding the deteriorated condition of the interpretation boards along the length of Hadrian's Wall.

Councillor Holland reminded Members that the Hadrian's Wall Action Group had been very successful in addressing local problems and suggested this Group may need to be reformed.

RESOLVED – That Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council take on board the concerns of the Parish Council representatives regarding Hadrian's Wall.

(c) Concurrent Services Grants

The Director of Resources (Carlisle City Council) reported that the City Council would not be stopping the Concurrent Services Grants in 2015/16, this would give Parishes time to adjust their precepts in phasing in the change.

(d) On Street Parking Charges

The Chairman understood that On Street Parking Charges were inevitable but asked if there was any possibility of free parking for a set time, perhaps half an hour. He also asked Cumbria County Council to look at the entrances to Carlisle which often became congested due to vehicles being parked on the side of the road.

(e) Maintenance of Cycleways

The Chairman had concerns that the cycleways within Carlisle were not being maintained to an acceptable standard. He asked that this be looked at to enable cyclists to use the cycleways safely and encourage them to leave their cars at home.

10. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman thanked all those present for their attendance and commented that the first Tripartite meeting had been very successful.

Councillor Glover reminded the meeting that Councillor Auld was stepping down as Chairman and this would be his last meeting. He thanked Councillor Auld for all of his hard work which he had undertaken on behalf of his Parish and both the City and County Councils.

(The meeting ended at 9.30pm)