

Report to  
**Council**

Agenda  
Item

11(iii)(b)

Meeting Date: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Public/Private\*: Public

Title: **Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report – Councillor  
Paul Nedved**

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The Panel met on the 1st March to scrutinise a Report on the Emerging Housing Strategy, an Update Report on progress on the Borderlands Growth Deal, the Quarter 3 Performance Report 2017/18 and the Overview Report and Work Programme.

### **Housing Strategy**

An extremely interesting series of presentations and discussions on the Emerging Housing Strategy was had by the Panel, Officers and representatives from local Housing Associations which included Ms Brailey from Home Group and Mr Brittain from Castles and Coasts.

Regrettably representatives from Riverside and Impact Housing Associations were unable to attend due to the heavy snow conditions that day. Riverside however will be appearing at the Panel meeting on the 5th April to provide an update.

The Housing Strategy develops two key themes as an Economic Driver and Housing and Health as emerging priorities.

Whilst no longer a statutory responsibility, the Panel were informed that a Housing Strategy gave direction and priorities for housing in the District as well as supporting Grant Applications.

The Housing Development Officer outlined in detail a wide range of data relating to Housing Completions, Affordable Housing Need, Overall Market Sales, Affordability Ratios and Empty Homes which resulted in wide ranging discussion by all parties.

Discussions with the Housing Associations are contained in the Minutes however they outlined their development strategies, repair and maintenance services and Affordable Housing Units built and in the pipeline.

Riverside and Impact had however provided a written statement for Members. Questions focused on the time frame for implementing the Housing Strategy, significant difference between target number of units of Total and Affordable completions and the units which had been built, static population growth in the District, the need for housing for older people, requirement for bungalows, how Home Bonus payments were managed by the Council and availability of housing for those with low incomes.

Some discussion revolved the number of empty homes in the District.

Finally the level of community engagement with tenants by Housing Associations was explored.

Generally the Panel welcomed the Reports however were anxious to have updates on any proposed merger between Riverside and Impact Housing Associations and how much money had the Council received in New Homes Bonus payments.

### **Borderlands Growth Deal**

A presentation and Report was provided by the Corporate Director of Economic Development on the Borderlands Proposition which outlined a series of Delivery Projects across the geographic area of the partnership with Carlisle at its hub. As far as the City was concerned key projects would be the Garden Village, Southern Relief Road and Carlisle Lake District Airport. Borderlands would be a distinct region with the constituent authorities all working together.

Discussions were being held with Government about proposed projects and themes and the priority of developing outline Business Cases in advance of the Autumn Statement. Infrastructure and skills would be uppermost considerations as well as submitting funding applications.

The Panel were extremely supportive of the Borderlands Initiative and the lead provided by Carlisle City Council and it's MP. Governance structures were also outlined.

A considerable amount of discussion was generated by Members with questions that covered the Low Carbon Economy Project, importance of transport connectivity, significance of Higher Education as a driver for economic growth and the perceived role of the LEP with the initiative.

Officers were thanked for their work to date and the Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that they would also have a large role to play in assisting the initiative going forward and would be included in future Work Programmes.

### **Quarter 3 Performance Report 2017/18**

The Panel reviewed the current Service Standards and summary of the Carlisle Plan including the Key Performance Indicators.

A series of comments and queries were raised by Members. An earlier dip in performance in Local Authority Searches was raised however the situation was now resolved.

Whilst the Council's flood recovery action in relation to its own assets would no longer be provided, the wider issue of the flood alleviation issues would still be scrutinised with the EA and Cumbria County Council continuing to report to the Panel.

The Panel also sought clarification as to the Council's rights and responsibilities with respect to the River Petteril, and a Position Statement would be provided by the Deputy Chief Executive.

Signage as part of Public Realm Phase 1 had been installed and that Public Realm Phase 2 was under consideration.

### **Overview Report and Work Programme**

It was felt by Members that the number of actions that had been completed was pleasing and the monitoring of resolutions was useful to Members as it kept them informed of the progress of issues.

Some initial discussion of the remaining Work Programme was held and some initial thoughts of items that would carry forward to the Economic Growth Panel in the Civic Year 2018/19 was also considered by Members and Officers.

The Panel met on the 5th April to consider the Annual Report and Update from Riverside, an update on progress of the emerging Heritage Asset Strategy for Carlisle District, an Update Report on the Business and Marketing Plans for the Tourist Information Centre, Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2017/18 and the Overview Report and Work Programme.

## **Riverside Update**

Sarah Paton, Regional Director of Riverside Housing Association provided a detailed update report to Members which included the negotiations on future Board arrangements with the Council, the proposed takeover of Impact Housing Association and Riverside's development programme.

In a lengthy Q&A Panel Members were keen to understand the nature of a proposed Regional Liaison Group and its governance structure and were keen to see at a future meeting of the Panel the Terms of Reference that would evolve. Critical would be the degree of local decision making and what area does a final regional plan cover.

Sarah Paton outlined the proposed partnership with Impact Housing Association and the reasoning behind it.

Panel Members were keen to understand the implications of the proposed partnership and whether services would still be delivered by local offices. Social enterprises such as Impact Furniture Services would be protected for 3 years. Pledges on additional affordable homes in Carlisle as part of the development programme were also outlined. Some discussion on customer service and neighbourhoods ensued as well as queries on the Riverside repair service and handling of customer complaints.

## **Carlisle City Council Emerging Heritage Asset Strategy**

A preliminary first draft of the Strategy was provided by the Regeneration Manager which enabling the Panel to see progress to date as well as scrutinise the emerging themes and priorities which would assist the Council in guiding conservation and heritage activities in Carlisle and District as well as raising awareness of the impact and value of local urban and rural heritage assets and future priorities for investment, funding and partnership working.

A role of a Council's Heritage Champion was also highlighted.

Members were made aware of the consultation process and were eager to add to robustness of the strategy as well as suggesting additional heritage projects that could be added to the list. In addition there was a request that the Council looked to include Heritage Assets in private ownership. The opportunities afforded by the excavation of the Roman Bathhouse as well as other previous excavated sites was discussed. There were some concerns on a separate matter as to progress with the Council's Local Listing Policy and how it would link up with the Heritage Strategy. Pilots had been undertaken in Denton Holme and Warwick Bridge. Overall the Heritage Strategy was welcomed.

## **Business and Marketing Plans for the Tourist Information Centre**

The Panel has for some years been involved directly with scrutiny of the TIC prior and during the process of refurbishment in 2015, including a Task And Finish Group and over the last 2 years the development of Business And Marketing Plans. In addition the Panel has been scrutinising the draft Economic Strategy for Carlisle District in which Tourism is a constituent part.

The Panel found the update interesting and made a series of comments on the Plans. Key proposals revolved around a service review which included the enlargement of the Tourist team to incorporate events and city centre management as well as a new role of a Destination Manager.

Other considerations were an increased digital approach to marketing, recommended income targets for retail in the TIC, promotion and widening the use of the Assembly Room and the observation that the TIC were dealing with a dramatic reduction in accommodation bookings due to online growth of booking sites.

Considerable discussions were had by Members on attracting visitors to the City and its range of attractions. Plans for maximising the benefit of the opening of Carlisle Lake District Airport for commercial flights in June were seen by the Panel as an important driver for tourism development for the District.

## **The Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18**

The Panel considered and commented on the Draft Report in relation to the Economic Growth Panel.

## **Overview Report and Work Programme**

Thank you to Officers for supplying detailed information requested by the Panel on a range of previous resolutions. The Panel also reviewed the Work Programme and had a preliminary discussion on recommendations for the 2018/19 Work Programme.

As Chair can I take this opportunity of thanking everyone who has been involved with the Economic Growth Panel in 2017 /18.

Full details of the discussions are to be found within the Minute Book.

**Cllr Paul Nedved**  
**Chairman**