

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Report of  
Chairman

**COUNCILLOR  
MRS C RUTHERFORD**

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

As well as the normal meeting of the Infrastructure O & S on 5<sup>th</sup> December, there have been two special meetings held on the 5<sup>th</sup> (pm) and the 13<sup>th</sup> (am).

The first was in relation to the Best Value Review into Regeneration that is being undertaken by the committee. A staged inspection of this review took place earlier this year and two of its findings were :

a need to be more focussed

and the need to include as many partners as possible at all stages of the review, including the scoping.

As a result this meeting did not just involve the members of the Infrastructure Committee, but also included other members of the authority and very importantly many of our partners.

The meeting commenced with a presentation by CRED who had undertaken a needs analysis of Carlisle. They then answered some questions before we broke up into working groups. I feel that the meeting was very constructive and at last we are moving forward on this review. The previous remit was too vague and broad and it has now become more focussed and re-titled "Supporting Communities". The needs analysis was based on electoral ward data and highlighted Carlisle South (i.e. Botcherby, Harraby, Upperby and Currock wards) as an area that scored high on many of the indicators of deprivation. These are wards that were not affected by the boundary changes that took place in Carlisle in 1999 so data collected over a period covering both pre and post boundary changes can be more easily compared. There is already work being done there under HAZ and Sure Start schemes that involve working with a number of the authority's partners. It is felt that by concentrating on this area the review will be more focussed and the results, which should give examples of good and bad practice will enable a set of criteria to be drawn up that can be applied elsewhere. There was some concern expressed that two areas should have been identified for the review to be more balanced, one from the urban and one from the rural. There is currently some work going on in rural areas under the Rural Action Zone, but it is only right that this authority should not lose sight of the fact that the district does cover a wide rural as well as urban area. The needs analysis did show that there was some deprivation in rural areas and that they may have to be dealt with differently from those in urban ones.

Whilst I now feel that, after some setbacks, we are now moving forward with this review there was some disappointment that our major partner in any regeneration of Carlisle, the County Council appears to be reluctant to be involved. Although invited they were unable to nominate an officer to work with the working group set up to steer this review and the county council officer who came to the meeting on the 5 December only stayed long enough to give his apologies. The letter received from the Chief



Executive, Mr Victory, by way of explanation was to say the least unsatisfactory. I have written to him to express my disappointment over the matter.

The second special meeting covered 'Tourism' and Chris Collier, the Chief Executive of Cumbria Tourist Board was invited to attend. Several reports dealing with trends in the UK, Cumbria and Carlisle had just been released and Chris Collier was able to update the Committee on a number of issues.

The minutes of this meeting give the full details of the discussion that took place some of major findings being:

The realisation by many businesses post F&M that they are part of the tourism scene and dependant upon tourism for their survival.

The need for individual businesses to concentrate on a quality product if they wish to be successful.

In order to achieve a quality product the need for investment in their product.

A clear image and identity that can be 'marketed'.

How the £1,000,000 pounds that the Government has given Cumbria post F&M is being spent, i.e which areas are being targeted.

Which areas of the market are already saturated and where there are gaps that it would be beneficial for Carlisle to aim for.

In all it was a very constructive and positive meeting and I would like to thank Chris Collier again for her very open and frank contribution to the debate.

Another meeting that gave food for thought was the APSE Elected Members' Forum that I attended in Manchester along with Councillor Guest on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

This session focussed on scrutiny issues so was particularly interesting. The first part was a presentation by a gentleman explaining how the select committees in Westminster work (or do not work depending on your view point). Whilst this was entertaining the real value was in the later group sessions when different authorities outlined how the scrutiny system operated in their own authority. Although, with the exception of one that had an elected mayor and manager, we all had a cabinet/leader modal how we organised the scrutiny bit varied enormously! Sharing concerns and problems can be very helpful if only to reassure yourself that you are not doing as badly as you thought