

Place Panel

Date: Thursday, 13 October 2022

Time: 16:00

Venue: Flensburg Room

Present: Councillor Trevor Allison, Councillor James Bainbridge, Councillor Ms Jo Ellis-Williams, Councillor Mrs Anne Glendinning, Councillor Mrs Linda Mitchell, Councillor Michael Mitchelson, Councillor Peter Sunter, Councillor Dr Les Tickner

Also Present: Councillor Mrs Bowman - Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Christian - Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder
Councillor Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

Officers: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Mr Rigg, Environment Agency
Mr Mounsey, Environment Agency
Mr Lawton, Environment Agency
Mr Coyle, Cumbria County Council

PLP.27/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were submitted.

PLP.28/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

PLP.29/22 PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

PLP.30/22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED - 1) That the Chair sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2022.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

PLP.31/32 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

PLP.32/22 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE ON FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT IN CARLISLE

The Corporate Director of Economic Development submitted report ED.27/22. The Chair welcomed Mr Rigg, Mr Mounsey, Mr Lawton, Mr Stephenson and Mr Coyle to the meeting

Mr Rigg and Mr Mounsey gave a presentation covering: summary of flood risk management completed works at a variety of sites across the district since 2015; recent improvements to the flood warning service in Carlisle; and planning for climate change on the River Eden.

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

- A number of Members commented on concerns raised by residents in areas surrounding the Caldew regarding the lack of progress in providing additional flood defence measures following the 2015 flood event (Storm Desmond).

Mr Rigg and Mr Mounsey explained that an initial scheme had been designed but had not been progressed due to issues relating to the technical delivery of the proposal. The Environment Agency was committed to delivering additional flood protection along the Caldew in Carlisle; work including data monitoring and model assurance was currently underway which would form the basis for developing a future scheme. In addition to the technical issues, matters such as riparian ownership and the proximity of residential properties were also factors that would need to be fully considered in the development of a new scheme.

As part of the development of a new scheme for the Caldew consideration would be given to the implementation of measures upstream. Each scheme had to be tailored to the individual circumstances of the particular river's catchment area, therefore the measures included across various schemes would differ.

Members were assured that the existing flood defences in the city were some of the best in the country, affording protection against a 1 in 200 year flood event. Members and Officers discussed how climate change may impact flood events in the future and how the Agency modelled and sought to incorporate the impact of climate change in its future flood resilience schemes.

- A Member noted that earlier in the year, the Environment Agency had indicated it intended to create a stakeholder group for flood resilience in the city, but as yet the group had not been created.

Mr Mounsey responded that he appreciated concern about the likelihood of a flood event occurring increased during the autumn and winter seasons. There was an active website, Flood Hub, which contained information relating to Carlisle Phase 2 schemes in the district, given the comments of Members, it may be useful if information regarding work to develop further flood resilience measures for the Caldew, Caldew Phase 3 were also published on the site for the public to access.

Members would be provided with the Flood Hub website address to enable them to share this with residents or businesses. The Panel were reminded that residents and businesses were able to sign up for flood alerts from the Environment Agency as well as resources to develop a plan for action to take in the event of a flood occurring.

A Member commented that he was reassured that the existing defences in the city were good. He sought information on the Agency's approach to planned maintenance of its structures such as storm drains, screens and grills.

Mr Mounsey explained that maintenance was a key part of the organisation's work in retaining flood resilience. Performance indicators set a target of 98% of assets to be in the required condition to address a flood event. The Agency carried out routine maintenance throughout the year which was augmented by operational maintenance for example additional work in the autumn time removing leave debris from structures to prevent clogging. Should a resident or business wish to contact the Agency regarding a blockage they could do so by ringing 0800 807060.

The Chair commented that the clearance of highways may also be a factor leading to a flood event, he asked how that matter may be looked at.

Mr Coyle (Cumbria County Council) indicated that he was happy to discuss any areas of concern and to work with the relevant local area manager to resolve the issue.

Mr Mounsey added that partnership working between the Agency and the county council was important to enable the full spectrum of flood issues to be addressed.

RESOLVED - 1) That the presentation be noted.

2) That the Panel were concerned that residents were provided with the latest information of developing flood schemes in the district.

PLP.33/22 HIGH STREET TASKFORCE

The Corporate Director of Economic Development submitted report ED.28/22 which set out background of the High Streets Task Force and contained the 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report and its recommendations.

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

- How had the attendees been selected?

The Corporate Director advised that the attendees were all members of the city centre task force which had been invited in its entirety, however not all had been able to attend.

The Member noted that none of the Ward Members had been invited to participate.

The Corporate Director responded that a meeting of the City Centre Task force was scheduled to take place on 27 October where Elected Members would be invited.

- The Chair expressed concern that the change to unitary authority in Cumbria would mean that the Council was less of a presence.

The Corporate Director acknowledged the Member's concerns, she hoped that the City Centre Task Force would gain greater traction as time moved on.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder considered that the City Centre Task Force had a great deal of potential and included a number local businesses. She was supportive of the 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report and its conclusions which she wished to take forward to create some activation in the city centre.

- A Member noted that there was an active Chamber of Trade and Commerce in the district and felt that the report added another layer to ongoing work. In relation to Local Government Reorganisation he felt that the work should be left to the new unitary authority. The amount of recently secured investment for the city centre was likely to be a draw, it was important that the other wards in the city were supported too.

The Corporate Director agreed there was a significant level of investment, to be delivered via a variety of projects. It was important that businesses were aware of those initiatives, the City Centre Task Force were aware of the upcoming initiatives; the next step was to consider how best to invigorate and support the evening and night time economy in the city.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder advised that the Chamber of Commerce did not work with SME's, however, one of the roles of the Carlisle Ambassadors, which had in excess of 400 members, was to promote the city. Regarding the suggestion that the recommendations of the 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' be left to Cumberland Council, she stated that she did not wish to have six months of no action, and hoped to take the recommendations forward.

- Was the work a duplication of the city centre working group?

The Corporate Director explained that the 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report had been funded and delivered as part of the Future High Streets Fund, its conclusions were not a surprise in the context of the economic recovery following the pandemic. An overview of some markers of increasing economic activity was given.

A Member welcomed the report and supported its viewpoint, he hoped that the Council would seek to implement as many of the recommendations therein prior to unitary authority.

RESOLVED - That the Panel request that the Executive implement the recommendations contained in the Unlocking Your Place Potential report.

PLP.34/22 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submitted the Overview Report (OS.23/22) which gave an overview of the Place Panel. Regarding the Panel's Work Programme, the Policy and Scrutiny Officer noted that the forthcoming two meetings had lengthy agendas; the Chair undertook to liaise with the Corporate Director of Economic Development to ensure that the agendas were manageable for Members.

In discussing the remit of the scrutiny panels, a member requested that the relevant budget monitoring reports for the Place Panel be added to the work programme. It was agreed that the Policy and Scrutiny Officer give consideration to how this could be progressed.

RESOLVED - 1) That report OS.23/22 be noted.

2) That the Chair liaise with the Corporate Director of Economic Development regarding the agenda items for the Panel's forthcoming meetings.

3) That the Policy Officer and Scrutiny Officer consider the inclusion of the budget monitoring reports in the Panel's Work Programme.

The Meeting ended at: 18:05