

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016 AT 10.07AM

PRESENT: Councillor Burns (Chairman), Councillors Betton (as substitute for Councillor Paton), Bloxham (as substitute for Councillor Layden), Ellis, Ms Franklin, Mrs McKerrell, McNulty and Ms Williams

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Glover (Leader)
Councillor Mrs Bradley (Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder)

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Economic Development
Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager
Environmental Health and Housing Manager
Principal Health and Housing Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Policy and Performance Officer

COSP.30/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Layden and Paton; Councillor Ms Quilter (Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Southward (Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder).

COSP.31/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

COSP.32/16 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That the Agenda be agreed as circulated.

COSP.33/16 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2016 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman; and that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2016 be noted.

COSP.34/16 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

COSP.35/16 FLOOD UPDATE REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted report SD.08/16 which formed part of a series of update reports prepared for Overview and Scrutiny Panels on flood recovery activities and future programmed work. For the benefit of new Members, he explained that the reports contained a generic section designed to give all Panels an overview of flood recovery work, together with a more specific section tailored to the work areas of each Panel.

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined, in some detail, the background position, together with specific updates relative to the Panel namely: Customer Services (including web, phone and face to face); housing support; sport, play and leisure facilities and partnership activity; arts activity (focused on the Old Fire Station); parks and open spaces; community centres; and resident support via the Carlisle Flood Partnership (led by Cumbria County Council), details of which were set out at Section 2.

Key points of note included:

- Background- the City Council continued to play a key role in supporting district and county wide groups who were focused on different aspects of flood recovery (transport infrastructure, housing, grants and community support);
- Flood grants and household payments – updated figures were set out at Section 2.3;
- £5,000 flood resilience grant – available to assist householders and businesses to make their properties more resilient in future. The Council was also now working in partnership with JBA consulting who were able to provide independent Property Protection reports.

The Council had received 374 grant applications and granted funded measures to 277 properties (5 were not eligible and 92 were incomplete), totalling £1,230,544. Of those the Council had paid out - 77 totalling £262,642.61;

- The Chief Accountant had submitted the Council's Bellwin claim on 1 June 2016. The total eligible expenditure was £404,398 of which the authority had to meet the first £26,486 (that had been included in the 2015/16 outturn). The claim also included £14,984 submitted on behalf of Greystone Community Centre for costs they incurred during the response to the flood.

Along with the claim 257 copy invoices and spreadsheets of overtime claims and additional fuel costs were submitted. DCLG would examine the claim and supporting information and would hopefully settle the claim quickly;

- Sport and leisure facilities and partnership activity – at Bitts Park four full size tennis courts and 4 mini courts were open to the public and for coaching sessions. Progress was also being made on the provision of a new canopy over those facilities.

Security at the Sheepmount site had been a particular challenge and the Green Spaces and Bereavement Services Manager was working on an assessment of related costs;

- Further information on progress regarding the reinstatement of Community Centres would be provided in the next update report;
- Members could be assured that Officers remained actively engaged in the County structure; on site flood events / resilience.

Views were again requested from Scrutiny Members on the future format and content of recovery programme updates.

As the programme developed it was clear that key areas such as costs of recovery, community issues, facility reinstatement would all be of interest to Members. However, in order to avoid unnecessary work, a guide to future areas of interest would assist Officers to prepare a useful set of updates.

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

- *A Member commented that he had been in attendance at the two very successful public forums held in Carlisle during May 2016, but noted that there was no City Council Officer representation on those occasions.*

The Member added that concerns had been raised regarding riverbanks, riverbeds and a bridge which was in a poor state and questioned whether those points had been taken on board. In his view little was being done.

In response the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that, whilst not publicly announced, the City Council was represented (at the Carlisle Flood Forum held on 11 May 2016 at the University of Cumbria, Fusehill Street Campus, Carlisle) by the Green Spaces and Bereavement Services Manager and two other Officers. He further undertook to provide a written response on the issues of concern alluded to, and assured the Member that the Green Spaces and Bereavement Services Manager, and the Grounds Maintenance and Green Spaces Manager were in discussions to gain a full understanding of costs involved in remediation works.

The Leader added that he had also been in attendance at the event held on 9 May 2016 at Holy Trinity Church, Wigton Road, Carlisle.

The Member stated that some very important issues had been raised at the above mentions Flood Forums to which City Council Officers could have contributed had they announced their presence.

Whilst acknowledging that point, the Deputy Chief Executive emphasised that liaison between the County and City Councils was clear and sharp. Discussions also took place with a variety of bodies, including GLL, the railways, etc.

- *Section 1.3 recorded that in March the Chancellor had announced that £25m capital would be made available for improving defence systems in Carlisle once the Environment Agency had concluded a review of the needs of the District. When would that review be concluded; and could information be provided on the implications for this Panel?*

A Member commented that he had spoken to the Environment Agency who were doing their part. It was therefore incumbent upon the County and City Councils to do likewise.

The Deputy Chief Executive indicated that he would clarify that aspect as part of his written response to Members. Following completion of the review Information would be provided to Members.

The Leader reported that the Director of Economic Development met with the Environment Agency on a fortnightly basis, but acknowledged that communication was not as good as it could be in terms of letting people know.

Problems associated with flooding included emotional problems / concern as to whether flooding may happen again in the future. It was unclear whether the £25m capital available for improving defence systems in Carlisle would be adequate. Both he and John Stevenson MP would do all that they could to ensure that the City was as resilient to flooding as possible.

In conclusion, the Leader assured Members that discussions were ongoing on a continuous basis.

- *A Member considered the use of an independent third party (JBA consulting) to provide independent Property Protection reports to be an excellent idea, but questioned the methodology by which that would be conveyed to applicants.*

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that applicants were asked whether they wished to engage via the website. He would, however, need to check whether more targeted and explicit advice was available.

- *The Council had received 374 grant applications. Was that considered to be good or bad?*

The Deputy Chief Executive commented that forming a judgement on that aspect was challenging. Clearly the situation was difficult for those who had suffered flooding and one may question how far the £500 allowance would alleviate the problems caused by 6/8' of flood water within a property. The City Council was being supportive via the provision of Officer time and was doing the best it could. In addition, the Director of Economic Development had been in discussion with central Government and had appraised them of the difficulties and nature of the flooding event in Carlisle and across the County.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder indicated that the level of grant take up was reflective of the position across the country and entirely understandable given that flood victims were coming to terms with what was a great loss. The City Council was helping fund accommodation.

The application forms provided/required by Government were detailed and all necessary criteria must be met before money would be allocated. It was therefore important that people received appropriate advice and to that end the Council was working in partnership with JBA consulting. She added that the Council and members of staff were doing a great job assisting people as far as possible.

- *Was the City Council required to pay money out prior to making its Bellwin Claim?*

The Deputy Chief Executive affirmed that was indeed the case.

- *A Member commented upon issues regarding the reinstatement of football pitches and questioned what was being done with regard to future insurance thereof. One option may be self-insurance.*

Another Member recalled that questions had been asked at full Council regarding insurance / rebuild costs for the Old Fire Station following the December 2015 flooding event. He asked whether the authority could be confident that the building could be insured in future.

A Member recognised that people paid money to access certain facilities, but took the view that parks were just as important. She sought clarification regarding the timescale for reopening Bitts Park.

Had consideration been given to utilising the Sainsbury's Section 106 money to improve the park?

The Deputy Chief Executive replied that negotiations were ongoing with the Insurers and the final position was as yet unknown. The Council could be confident on the issue of future insurance of the Old Fire Station.

The Deputy Chief Executive gave a brief overview of the next phase of the recovery plan. He advised that work required to be undertaken over the coming fortnight, in consultation with Portfolio Holders, to form a view. Bitts Park would re-open in stages as facilities became available. Effective communication was key.

On the latter point, the Director of Economic Development confirmed that the Section 106 monies were already allocated and were not therefore available.

➤ *Who was responsible for prioritising the various recovery works?*

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive commented that priority had been given to the provision of services (Hostel / community services). Some facilities were easier to reinstate than others; and the programme was dependent upon the availability of contractors. Completion of recovery works was not therefore entirely within the Council's gift.

➤ *The Council had gone through a Voluntary Redundancy / Early Release process as a result of which a number of Officers were about to or had already left the authority. Had flood recovery activities been delayed as a result?*

The Deputy Chief Executive said that there had been no delay to date. However, a key member of staff would be leaving in the next few weeks and work was being done to ensure that the necessary skills remained in place.

➤ *Six months had passed since the floods. The initial intention was that the Old Fire Station would be open for business by now. Explain the reasons for that delay.*

The Deputy Chief Executive indicated that the delay could, in the main, be attributed to the time spent in detailed negotiations with the Insurer's Loss Adjuster who was extremely busy and also required to work in other areas.

➤ *Botcherby Community Centre was severely damaged by flood waters, remained closed and was currently sharing accommodation and delivering services from Petteiril Bank Community Centre. Could anything be done to link the Community Centre with the local community at this time?*

A Member sought clarification regarding the City Council's involvement in Downagate Community Centre.

The Deputy Chief Executive summarised the current position, commenting that the Community Centre Manager was meeting with Officers, issues under discussion including how best to communicate with residents.

The situation regarding Downagate Community Centre differed in that whilst the Council owned the land, the building did not belong to the authority. The City Council had sought to provide advice and guidance. Downagate Community Centre Management Committee was in discussion on how to take issues forward.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for his most informative and useful update.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel had reviewed Report SD.08/16 and given consideration to the progress made to date and the recovery plans going forward.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive arrange to provide a written response to the concerns / questions raised by Members regarding riverbanks, riverbeds and a bridge; together with the Environment Agency's review into the needs of the Carlisle District in terms of flood defence systems and the implications for the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

COSP.36/16 HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION SERVICE RESTRUCTURE (SUPPORTING PEOPLE)

During consideration of this item, Councillor Betton declared an interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct. The interest related to any reference to Cumbria County Council of which he was also a Member. Councillor Betton took part in discussion.

The Director of Economic Development began by introducing the Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager and explaining the purpose of report ED.24/16 which was to brief Members on the local changes to Supporting People contracting.

The Chairman felt that it would be beneficial if the Panel was provided with more detail on the changes to the Supporting People contract.

In response, the Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager gave an overview of the Council's emergency homeless accommodation portfolio which comprised 50 units of accommodation; 10 flexible family units at Water Street, which could be split if required to take up to 16 households. She added that the John Street temporary accommodation for single men (comprising 29 units) remained closed temporarily pending reinstatement as a result of flooding in December 2015. Males experiencing homelessness, who the City Council had a statutory responsibility to accommodate, were residing within dispersed units within the temporary accommodation portfolio. Additional units were currently being sourced to increase capacity and minimise risks. No single males were accommodated within the women and families accommodation.

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager explained that the authority delivered intensive housing management. She then outlined in some detail the background to and tendering process in relation to the Supporting People Contract, commenting that up until 31 March 2016 Carlisle City Council Homeless Accommodation Service was a commissioned provider of Supporting People funded Housing Related Support for women and families experiencing homelessness; with a contract value of £126,000.

The County Council at its Cabinet meeting on 24 September approved a 25% reduction to the current county wide budget of £2.36m PA to £1.76m PA for Housing Related Support linked to Supported Temporary Accommodation effective from 1st April 2016. Carlisle was allocated 20% of the county wide budget resulting in a reduction of 85 units for people experiencing homelessness; and a reduction of 10 units for young people across Carlisle and Eden.

Consideration was given whether to retender, however due to changes in re-contracting terms (from block contracting to spot purchasing); the potential high risks posed as a result including TUPE; and the limited availability of local provision, it was decided not to do so.

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager further highlighted the service restructure undertaken following that decision to ensure that the City Council continued to meet its statutory obligations in relation to homelessness; the agreement of the formal offer of an annual grant of £75,712 from the County Council (available for four years); the update from Louise Elsworth-Barnes (Cumbria Advice and Support Team Leader, Cumbria County Council); and the explanation of how issues identified were being addressed, as detailed at Section 1 of the report.

It was proposed that the Supporting People grant funding would 100% fund 2 x FTE additional staff on fixed term contracts from 2016 – 2020 to provide housing related support services in line with the grant requirements.

The grant funding would also be utilised to cover a management contribution and an exit strategy.

Discussion arose, during which the following issues were raised:

- *As stated above, Carlisle had been allocated 20% of a county wide budget resulting in a reduction of 85 units for people experiencing homelessness. What action had been taken to address that gap in provision?*

In response, the Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager summarised the many hours of hard work which had gone into ensuring that people were rehoused, which had been effective.

- *Table 1 (Section 1.16) profiled the current providers and number of current Supporting People funded units in Carlisle. A Member questioned whether the generic client group diminished the service.*

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager stated that the concern that specialist support may be lost in terms of future commissioning was raised in 2015. Her view was that different people required different support. Discussion had taken place at that time, which included Turning Point and Impact Housing Association. The position would be monitored.

The Director of Economic Development added that those concerns had been raised by the City Council.

- *A Member asked whether demand outweighed capacity and, if so, what could be done to address that.*

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager clarified that demand did not outweigh capacity. Following the procurement exercise Officers had worked extremely hard to pre-empt increased demand and minimise risk. Clearly the flooding of John Street Hostel had not helped matters, but that would be reinstated and work had already been undertaken to source additional units in conjunction with other partners.

- *A Member considered the word 'Hostel' to be outmoded and suggested that it should not be used in future reports. That aside he congratulated the Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager and her team upon all that they had achieved.*

The Member further considered that when a number of high profile providers decided not to re-tender warning bells should ring.

In his view the update from the Cumbria Advice and Support Team Leader (Section 1.11) was not sufficiently detailed and meant little. The Member recalled that in years gone by frequent meetings took place to discuss supporting people going forward. He questioned whether that was no longer the case.

The Leader replied that at that time funding stemmed from central Government, the budget being ring fenced. Cumbria County Council distributed block grants to the districts to provide support within the community. The position subsequently changed, the effect being that relationships were now more informal. Money now went directly to individuals, the downside being that providers were nervous of tendering for contracts due to the risks involved which was problematic.

The Director of Economic Development commented that, had the Commissioning Board remained in place, it would have been most helpful as a vehicle by which to raise concerns. Various conversations had taken place with a view to influencing the approach to support services, however, the end decision was one for Cumbria County Council's Cabinet.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder added that the reduction in the county wide budget had given cause for concern. It should be noted that other areas had ceased to provide housing related support, but the County Council was still doing so. The attempt to equalise the distribution of grant across districts had affected Carlisle as the Council was seen as a provider across the county.

- *A Member expressed concern regarding funding levels, emphasising that need was not generic e.g. children went to special schools due to their individual needs. She was further concerned at future support for those suffering from domestic abuse and mental health issues.*

The Director of Economic Development explained that those were county wide matters. Officers were working to try to understand associated issues / pressures and be able to feed back to the County Council. Further discussions would need to take place prior to the identification of a date for inclusion of the matter in the Panel's Work Programme.

- *The authority had always worked very hard on the preventative aspect of homelessness.*

In response, the Director of Economic Development confirmed that prevention was indeed key to the City Council's mantra.

- *At the last Panel meeting concern had been expressed regarding the closure of the Women's Refuge and how that would impact the provision of future support for victims. A Member sought clarification of the current position and whether women were aware thereof.*

The Director of Economic Development advised that women were aware, a number being accommodated at Water Street. One lady had been particularly impressed with the accommodation, security and the fact that children up to and in some cases over the age of 16 years could be accommodated.

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager reiterated that the City Council had a statutory responsibility to accommodate anyone presenting as homeless, and that anyone feeling violence or the threat of violence would be in priority need under the homeless legislation. Importantly, staff (trained in a variety of skills) were on site 24 hours a day meaning that the service was always in a position to respond quickly and effectively to anyone in an emergency situation.

The Director of Economic Development added that it may be useful for Panel Members to visit the Water Street site to see the accommodation for themselves.

A Member concurred with the Director's suggestion, with the proviso that any visit was undertaken at the invitation of those housed there.

- *A Member referred to the £75,712 annual grant from the County Council and questioned whether there had been a change in the criteria associated thereto.*

The Director of Economic Development replied that the grant allocation was to support households who were homeless or at serious risk of homelessness in Carlisle District; to access appropriate housing related support linked to accommodation which equated to the three categories detailed at Section 1.8. The only change was that the number of households linked to domestic violence placements had been increased from 4 to 5.

- Referring to Sections 1.2 and 1.3, a Member asked whether the authority was no longer spot buying to anticipate demand.

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager indicated that was not the case, and summarised once again the decision making process for the Member's benefit. Data was monitored on a quarterly basis; and prevention formed a significant part of the Section's work.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder informed Members that the City Council's Homeless and Hostel Services had been awarded the Bronze Standard Award by the National Practitioner Service as part of the Government Gold Standard for Homelessness Services. It was anticipated that achievement of the Gold Standard, which was a key action within the Homelessness Strategy for Carlisle, would be attained within 18 months.

The Chairman recognised the difficult and often emotive nature of the subject. He added that Members were very pleased with the service provided and congratulated those Officers involved.

RESOLVED – (1) That, subject to the issues detailed above, the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the amended structure / ways of working within Carlisle City Council's Homeless Accommodation service following the end of the Supporting People contract on 31 March 2016; and acceptance of a grant from Supporting People on 7 April 2016.

(2) That arrangements be made for Panel Members to undertake a site visit to the Women and Families accommodation at Water Street, Carlisle, subject to the agreement of residents.

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon and reconvened at 12.05 pm

COSP.37/16 FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN

The Environmental Health and Housing Manager introduced himself and also the Principal Health and Housing Officer, and outlined their respective roles / responsibilities. Members' attention was drawn to the Chart at page 50 of the Agenda document pack which set out the Environmental Health and Housing structure 2016/17.

The Environmental Health and Housing Manager reported (LE.09/16) on the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan covering the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

He explained that the Plan set out how the Environmental Health Service would deploy its resources in 2016 to 2017 to improve hygiene standards, prevent food borne diseases and help people live healthier lives. It sought to target intervention to tackle local issues whilst ensuring that Carlisle City Council achieved its national statutory responsibilities.

In improving food standards the Environmental Health Service was contributing towards ensuring a safe, healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefit of consumers. Service Plans were an important part of the process to ensure that national priorities and standards were addressed and delivered locally.

Details of the Food Standard Agency's expectations in terms of the delivery of official controls on feed and food law; the Service's contribution to the Council's Carlisle Plan; the requirements of The Food Law Codes of Practice (2015); and the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Strategy for 2015-2020 were provided. The FSA recognised that they could not achieve their strategic goals in isolation and acknowledged the important role played by local government officers in ensuring food safety. This authority would be mindful of any regulatory and code of practice changes proposed by the FSA during the forthcoming year and would, where necessary, adjust planned priorities accordingly.

The Executive had considered the matter at their meeting on 6 June 2016 (EX.37/16) and had referred the Plan to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration and comment in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Members raised the following comments and questions during their scrutiny of the report:

- *A Member made reference to the 'Scores on the Doors' food hygiene ratings scheme and questioned whether one could expect to see the scores displayed in fast food outlets.*

The Principal Health and Housing Officer advised that the scheme was applicable to any premises recognised by the public as providing meals/drink. Such premises (including take-aways, restaurants, Bed and Breakfast establishments, etc) were awarded a rating as part of the Section's inspection work.

- *Was the authority responsible for the inspection of Churches, Village Halls, etc where meals were provided?*

In response, the Principal Health and Housing Officer confirmed that by law food businesses required to be registered. He explained that the issue was around frequency e.g. a Village Hall whereby food was provided once a year at Christmas time may not need to be formally registered with the local authority. The premises would, however, need to comply with food hygiene standards.

The Environmental Health and Housing Manager explained that Category E premises were defined in the Food Law Code of Practice as low risk food establishments. Local authorities were allowed to adopt an alternative enforcement strategy to ensure that resources were prioritised accordingly towards higher risk premises, but must ensure that low risk premises were subject to an alternative enforcement intervention every three years. The current strategy adopted by the City Council was set out on page 45 of the Agenda document pack.

- *Certain organisations prepared food at home prior to transporting it to venues. How was that scenario dealt with?*

The Principal Health and Housing Officer stated that in those circumstances an analysis of the risks involved would be required prior to the identification of necessary interventions.

- *During 2015/16 Officers had issued 209 written warnings for food hygiene contraventions. What was the next stage in the process?*

The Principal Health and Housing Officer replied that Officers would determine the action to be taken, depending upon the seriousness of the contravention.

- *A Member sought clarification regarding the 2015/16 performance figure of 25% for Category E through the Alternative Enforcement Programme.*

The Principal Health and Housing Officer referenced Section 4.1, commenting that the authority alternated a visit with an enforcement questionnaire every 3 years. The intention was to review the enforcement questionnaire, together with the information obtained therefrom. A Technical Officer would be appointed in September 2016, a key action of their role being to look at Category E premises.

The Environmental Health and Housing Manager added that the City Council's performance was fed back to the FSA; comparative results were published on their website.

- *How open was the authority in terms of the provision of information to the press/public; would information be provided to the Press without submission of a Freedom of Information request?*

In response, the Principal Health and Housing Officer stated that if a specific request was received the information must be supplied (subject to data protection disclosure requirements). Businesses were aware of that.

The Environmental Health and Housing Manager added that information would be withheld if premises were still under inspection / during the appeals process. Otherwise the authority was as open and transparent as possible.

- *What percentage of premises would comply with legislation if the authority was did not undertake inspections?*

The Principal Health and Housing Officer confirmed that compliance in Carlisle was 98%.

The Environmental Health and Housing Manager added that currently pressure was being brought to bear on the FSA to reduce the burden on businesses and to reduce inspection rates. Wales had been quite active and determined that inspections did drive up standards.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their interesting and informative report.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel had given consideration to the key actions of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan (appended to Report LE.09/16).

(2) That the observations of the Panel, as detailed above, be conveyed to the Executive.

COSP.38/16 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Policy and Performance Officer began by introducing himself for the benefit of new Panel Members.

The Policy and Performance Officer then submitted report PC.08/16 providing an update on the Council's service standards that helped measure performance. Also included were updates on key actions contained within the new Carlisle Plan.

With regard to the information on the Carlisle Plan, the intention was to provide the Panel with a brief overview of the current position without duplicating the more detailed reporting that took place within the Overview and Scrutiny agendas and Portfolio Holder reports.

The report differed slightly from those presented earlier in the year as it encompassed information against the new priorities / activities contained in the new Carlisle Plan 2015-18. Freedom of Information figures for the year had been included at Section 1 as requested previously by some Members.

The undernoted questions and observations were raised in discussion:

- *Members sought clarification regarding the Service Standard of 40 missed collections per 100,000 (industry standard), and the average of 49 misses per 100,000 collections per month (2014/15: 36).*

In response the Policy and Performance Officer confirmed that the Service Standard was 40 missed collections, rather than rounds; and the reference to 36 related to the number of missed collections per 100,000 collections.

- *The Community Sport Activation Fund (CSAF) programme was coming to an end. Could any indication be given of what would replace the programme in terms of sustaining the programme of activities?*

The Deputy Chief Executive undertook to investigate the matter and respond to Members.

- *Was any evidence available that the work undertaken by the Carlisle Partnership was making a difference to Carlisle and Cumbria.*

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the constituent groups of the Carlisle Partnership had in place action plans and targets which required to be met; in addition to which the Partnership Executive undertook a monitoring role and chose a relevant topic per quarter. The Minutes of the Carlisle Partnership Executive stood as a formal record. He added that further information could be provided via the Panel's work programme.

- *A Member referred to the Service Standard concerning the percentage of household waste sent for recycling. Clearly the matter affected communities, but no information was provided on action being undertaken to achieve a better output. The Member was concerned to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny could make a difference.*

The Deputy Chief Executive replied that the issue could be addressed as part of the quarterly corporate performance reports provided to the Panel. He assured Members that the issue of Re-thinking Waste was being addressed in detail through the Executive and the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that, since the departure of the Director of Local Environment, the Neighbourhood Services Manager met with the Team to consider relevant issues including recycling levels. Notice was therefore taken of relevant data sets.

- *Had performance levels detailed within the report been affected by the December 2015 floods?*

The Policy and Performance Officer considered it fair to say that the floods had an impact upon performance.

- A Member referred to the Priority of supporting business growth and skills development to improve opportunities and economic prospects for the people of Carlisle. He further commented upon the severity of the economic recession and the fact that it had taken a decade for the economy to recover to a stage whereby industry and commerce were willing to invest. That was a reminder of how global forces could impact upon local development.
- *Page 74 of the Agenda Document Pack recorded that the “Demonstration Project” approved by the Executive on 24 August 2016 would deliver 40 new affordable homes on a Council owned site at Beverley Rise, Harraby; and that the Executive had on 14 July 2016 approved the new Low Cost Home Ownership Policy for 300+ properties on the Council’s register.*

A Member was concerned that people could not necessarily afford to buy the new homes or alternatively may wish to pay an affordable rent, and questioned whether the above included an element of social housing.

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive indicated that the authority did try to work with Registered Social Landlords to provide a good supply of affordable housing, but the position was becoming increasingly difficult bearing in mind the potential implications of the Housing Bill. He added that, although the City Council would endeavour to provide a balanced housing stock, it must be recognised that much was out with the authority’s control.

Another Member suggested that a report on social / affordable housing should be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman suggested that the issue be addressed during consideration of the Panel’s Work Programme later on the Agenda.

- *The service standard of 22 days for processing of the average number of new benefits claims appeared lengthy and processing periods could be more efficient.*

The Policy and Performance Officer confirmed that the majority of claims were processed more quickly. However, certain more complex claims took longer to process and affected the overall performance position.

The Deputy Chief Executive pointed out that the year end figure of 18 days constituted a marked improvement in performance which was positive news.

- *A Member sought further detail regarding the allocation to Carlisle under the Better Care Fund of £1.4m for the 2016/17 financial year.*

In response, the Policy and Performance Officer undertook to obtain further information on that aspect.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report PC.08/16, End of Year Performance Report 2014/15, be noted.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive arrange for a response to be provided to Members clarifying the action being taken to make the key programmes and activities sustainable with the support of partners following the conclusion of the Community Sport Activation Fund.

(3) That the Policy and Performance Officer arrange to provide further detail on Carlisle’s allocation of £1.4m under the Better Care Fund for the 2016/17 financial year.

COSP.39/16 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.11/16 which provided an overview of matters relating to the work of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and included the latest version of the work programme and Key Decisions of the Executive which related to the Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Notice of Executive Key Decisions, published on 6 May 2016, included KD.05/16 – Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2016/17. At the Panel meeting on 31 March 2016 Members had not requested consideration of that item. It had subsequently been agreed that the matter be included on the Agenda for this meeting.

A further Notice of Executive Key Decisions, published on 3 June 2016, included the following item which fell within the remit of this Panel:

KD.11/16 – Capital Release for Play Areas and Open Space Improvement

The Executive would be asked to approve the release of the capital sums from two separate Section 106 Agreements for the purpose of improving play areas and open spaces. The decision would be taken on 4 July 2016.

Members did not raise any questions or comments on the items contained within the Notice of Executive Key Decisions.

The work programme for the Panel had been circulated for comment / amendment. The Panel needed to discuss and develop the work programme for 2016/17. Panel Members, Portfolio Holders and senior Officers were also asked to give some thought to issues to which Scrutiny could add value during the current Municipal Year and should consider adding to their work programme. Guidance on Scrutiny Agenda Planning was attached at Appendix 2, and Members were encouraged to use the prioritisation aid contained in the guidance to ensure that items placed on the work programme were those that Scrutiny could add value to.

*A Member expressed interest in the Guidance on Scrutiny Agenda Planning and, in particular, the statement that “an overarching criteria for including an item on the agenda is that the Panel must be able to **add value** or **make a difference** to the issue....” Overview and Scrutiny was an important function; there were new Members on the Council; and he felt therefore that it would be prudent for Overview and Scrutiny training to be provide for all Members via an informal Council Briefing.*

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer replied that training was provided (open to all Members), but the take up thereof had been poor.

The Chairman added that the Guidance alluded to formed part of the general overview provided to Members. New Member Induction Sessions were also provided by the Director of Governance and other Officers.

Turning to the Panel’s work programme for 2016/17, the Chairman emphasised once again the need for Members to add value / make a difference.

In discussion it was agreed that the work programme be updated to include future provision of social / affordable housing, and Community Centres.

Members also suggested that youth issues, including provision for young people in the rural areas as a potential topic for consideration.

The Chairman emphasised the need to consider what the City Council could do to take proper cognisance of young people and to make a difference. Consideration could perhaps be given to the establishment of a Task and Finish Group, and he suggested that the matter be investigated further prior to inclusion on the Panel's Work Programme.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work programme and Key decision items relevant to this Panel (OS.11/16) be noted.

(2) That the future provision of social / affordable housing; and community centres be included within the Panel's Work Programme for 2016/17.

(3) That further consideration be given to youth issues as a future topic for scrutiny.

(Meeting ended at 1.00 pm)