

Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item

11(ii)(b)

Meeting Date: 24 April 2018

Public/Private*: Public

Title: Business and Transformation Scrutiny Chairman's Report – Councillor Jessica Riddle

The first item on this agenda was a “**Call In**” of the decision by the Portfolio Holder on car park closures. There was a great deal of discussion around the timing of this decision and the question of anti-social behaviour in these car parks. It was made clear by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive that the decision had been made in collaboration with partners in the Multi-Agency Hub. However, although the decision making process was clear in this instance a mistake had been made and lessons learned. After a vote it was resolved not to refer the decision back to the Executive.

The report on the **re-instatement of the ground floor** after the flood was received with a great deal of interest. Representative of WYG were present to provide further information if needed. There were concerns about future flooding but the new design of the ground floor had taken account of that by building additional resilience into the design thereby ensuring that any future re-instatement would be done in a fraction of time, months as opposed to years. Flooding was a risk that had to be managed and planned for. The proposed multi-purpose chamber came in for many comments, whether it was too big, too vulnerable to flooding, not suitable as a conference facility, concerns over adequate and reliable audio/visual provisions, seating on one level.

With regard to the actual customer contact centre it was pointed out by a member that the destruction of the contact centre had an impact on the public and the provision of services. The staff had coped very well in the temporary porta-cabin for the past 2 years but at times I am sure it must have been a struggle. The new facilities would take into consideration that although many people interacted with the council online, there was a need for more private consultation.

Making our services easily available was a priority for the council. Cllr John Mallinson wished it recorded that he did not support the proposals; they should be rejected and the

project reviewed again. However, the proposals for the re-instatement were accepted by the majority of the scrutiny panel with several recommendations to the Executive.

The draft **Annual Scrutiny Report** section relating to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel was considered by the members. It was agreed that the new design of the report was much more acceptable. Portfolio holders over the year have been regular attendees at scrutiny panels. Unfortunately both portfolio holders had to leave this meeting early. The Chair was requested to write to the Leader expressing the Panel's disappointment.

The **Action Plan** for the spend Of the **Disabled Facilities Grant** was presented. This grant has been greatly increased over the last 2 years, and as a result there has been more opportunity to be flexible in how the grant is used e.g. additional Occupational Therapist (OT) support, and subject to review the possibility of providing loans as well as working more closely with partners.

There is still a great deal of work to be done to promote these grants through OTs and using Carlisle Focus and other information sources. The Regulatory Services Manager and his team and the Finance team are to be commended for the pro-active work they are undertaking to encourage more grant applications from residents thereby enabling people to continue to live safely in their own homes.

The **Corporate Risk Register** update was considered by the panel. Although 3 risks had been removed from the register the Panel was assured that sufficient arrangements were in place ensuring that the Council could mitigate these risks. The Economic Strategy, Housing Strategy and Regeneration Strategy all had a role in mitigating these risks

Finally, I would like to thank the Panel members for their input into the work of this Panel. It has been a pleasure to chair such a lively group of members. I include the officers in my thanks for their unfailing courtesy and knowledge in answering the many and varied questions. We have also been fortunate in having such a hardworking and dedicated Scrutiny Officer. He has done an outstanding job in supporting our work programme. Thanks for all his help.

Very last but certainly not least, my thanks go to my Vice Chair for her support over the last year. It has made my job as Chair just that little bit easier.

Cllr Jessica Riddle

Chair – Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel