

Report to:

**Council**

Agenda  
Item

11(i)(b)

Meeting Date: 28 April 2015

Public/Private\*: Public

Title: **Community Overview and Scrutiny Chairman's Report – Councillor  
Rob Burns**

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## **COSP Chairs Report - April 2015**

### **Spring Heeled**

My RE teacher at school had a saying which he'd bring out every year after the Easter holidays when he'd start to prepare the timetable for lessons leading up to the exams. 'Spring' he would say 'is the time for plans and projects.'

I only recently discovered that the quote was attributed to Leo Tolstoy, who clearly hadn't adopted this philosophy yet when he set about writing his short story, War and Peace!. I don't know why I mention this, other than that it is Spring and that as Councillors, we have begun the process of planning projects for the forthcoming year.

The prospect of some potentially exciting new developments on the horizon immediately lifts the spirit, as does the prospect of the season of Spring itself.

In fact the word itself suggests energy, liveliness, movement and new life, which is why so many of us are energised by it and why it is as near to a rational explanation as I can give to explain why, when I saw a horse called Spring Heeled was running in the Grand National, I rushed out and put my pocket money on it to win.

Unfortunately, like many Springs before, it flattered to deceive, but I know that some of the issues that will be placed before us next year, will not disappoint and so it is with a spring in my step that I tread toward the new civic year with optimism and enthusiasm.

I know there will be colleagues who carry memories of a disproportionate number of false dawns, or too many rainy St Swithin's days or are burdened by the shackles of 'austerity'. But this Council has been through difficult times before and has invested its way through them.

I think the mood in COSP this year has been bullish and positive and hopefully will continue to be so next year.

Go home tonight and listen to Ella Fitzgerald;  
Blue skies smiling at me,  
Nothing but blue skies do I see!!

### **Down by the Riverside**

Continuing the theme of optimism, COSP received a presentation from Riverside Cumbria outlining some of the progress that has been made in its maintenance and capital development programmes during the past six months.

The minutes of the meeting which accompany this report, give a clear picture of an organisation seeking to move forward and whilst Members noted some concerns, particularly relating to the currently disappointing levels of customer satisfaction, Dean Butterworth, the Director of Riverside Cumbria, gave an encouraging assessment of how he saw the company improving that and other areas of their service.

This view was supported by the Chair of Riverside's Tenant Scrutiny Panel, Ian Heywood, who also gave a presentation on behalf of that Panel and whilst highlighting the need to 'continue to improve communication in its many forms' between the organisation and tenants, he too was confident that relationships and services were improving.

It was interesting to note that while there appeared to be a good working relationship between officers of Riverside and the City Council, Mr Butterworth felt that there could be a better relationship on a strategic level.

The City Council of course, continues to make social housing a priority, although there are issues connected to the emerging Local Plan that need to be developed further with Riverside and other partners, if we are to meet the increase in need for social housing across the city.

### **Hi Ho Silver!**

Actually it wasn't the late, great, masked lawman, the Lone Ranger who rode into the last COSP meeting astride his magnificent steed, Silver, but Cumbria Constabulary's Sgt Tony Kirkbride (not to be confused with Roy Rogers) who moseyed along with Trigger, well, Community Trigger to be more precise.

Community Trigger is in fact the latest legislative tool designed to give victims of anti social behaviour, (ASB) or their representatives, the right to ask local agencies to review their responses to complaints and to consider what action might be taken if the behaviour persists.

This 'new' approach encourages Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's) to take a more collaborative problem solving approach to resolving persistent cases of ASB and should improve existing processes and practices.

Members of the public will be able to request a Community Trigger by a variety of means and there will be a single point of contact (SPOC) who, in the case of the Carlisle and Eden CSP, will be the City Council's Community Development Officer.

In Carlisle, Problem Solving Groups have for some time, been useful tools for resolving many social/community disputes and what further impact this new 'trigger' will have, remains to be seen.

I hope that this will not be just another new set of clothes for the Emperor, but any initiative which might bring solace and justice to victims of the misery of ASB should be welcomed and in order to monitor progress, Members of COSP requested that instances of when Community Trigger had been activated, should become part of the Performance Management Report.