

**JOINT MEETING BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND REPRESENTATIVES
FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS**

TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2011 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Mitchelson (Chairman) (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor J Mallinson (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor R Bloxham (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor M Bowman (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor G Ellis (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor J Geddes (Carlisle City Council)

Mr D Sheard (Cumbria County Council)

Councillor R Auld (Chairman, Carlisle Parish Councils Association)
Mrs G Dumpleton (Parish Liaison Officer, CALC)
Mr D Claxton (CALC)
Councillor P Brown (Arthuret Parish Council)
Mrs K Johnson (Arthuret Parish Council)
Councillor P Rowland (Beaumont Parish Council)
Mrs M McKenna (Beaumont Parish Council)
Mrs V Sealby (Burgh-by-Sands Parish Council)
Councillor J Stonebridge (Burgh-by-Sands Parish Council)
Councillor A Oliver (Burtholme Parish Council)
Councillor T Allison (Cummersdale Parish Council)
Councillor B Craig (Dalston Parish Council)
Councillor H Cain (Hayton Parish Council)
Mr C Moth (Hethersgill Parish Council)
Councillor J Harris (Irthington Parish Council)
Councillor M Ridley (Irthington Parish Council)
Councillor W Bundred (Kirkandrews on Esk Parish Council)
Councillor W Little (Orton Parish Council)
Councillor D Johnson (St Cuthbert Without Parish Council)
Ms I Powley (St Cuthbert Without Parish Council)
Councillor C Nicholson (Stanwix Rural Parish Council)
Councillor D Newrick (Upper Denton Parish Council)
Councillor Ms J Holland (Wetheral Parish Council)
Councillor M Higginbotham (Wetheral Parish Council)
Councillor R Wickings (Wetheral Parish Council)

ALSO PRESENT :

Dr J Gooding (Town Clerk and Chief Executive)
Mr D Crossley (Strategic Director)
Ms A Culleton (Assistant Director (Local Environment))
Mr K Gerrard (Assistant Director (Community Engagement))
Mr M Lambert (Assistant Director (Governance))
Mrs J Meek (Assistant Director (Economic Development))

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Earp (Wetheral Parish Council); Councillor K McIntosh (Chairman, Cummersdale Parish Council), Mrs P Macdonald (Orton Parish Council); and Councillor David Taylor (Chairman, Nether Denton Parish Council),

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the joint meeting.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting between the City Council's Executive and Representatives of Parish Councils held on 20 June 2011 were circulated.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be received and agreed as a true record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK; AND HOUSING NEED AND DEMAND STUDY / HOUSING STRATEGY

The Leader informed the meeting that the Assistant Director (Economic Development) and the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) would give a joint presentation on the future of housing and development in Carlisle.

Copies of the Council's Housing Strategy 2011-15 and draft Housing Action Plan were submitted.

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) began by indicating that she had given a presentation on the Local Development Framework at the last Parish Council Liaison Group meeting. Tonight it was her intention to provide a quick reminder of what the City Council was trying to achieve; feedback received on the Issues and Options Paper; and drill down into the Housing Need and Demand Study, all of which linked together.

She then gave a presentation on the Local Development Framework (LDF), including details of the documents which made up the Framework; the benefits; key issues; National Housing Policy; and LDF (Housing aspirations, evidence base/consultations).

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) advised that, although public consultation on the Issues and Options had now finished, further responses could be taken on board provided they were received as soon as possible.

It was, however, important to note that the next stage (Preferred Options public consultation) comprised a statutory consultation period. By way of assistance the Council would endeavour to give Parish Councils pre-warning of the consultation dates.

The Leader invited questions.

Councillor Auld stated that the Issues and Options consultation exercise had proved very difficult for the Parish Councils. It comprised a large and complex document. He stressed that the consultations referred to were vitally important and greater consultation was therefore required.

In response, the Economic Development Portfolio Holder said that the Council did recognise the importance of Parish Council feedback and that certain Parish Councils did not meet on a regular basis. A Parish Liaison meeting was proposed for 17 January 2012 (including an opportunity to meet with the Planning Team) and the Council would consult on the timing thereof with a view to ensuring that as many people as possible had the opportunity to attend.

In the meantime, she asked that Parish Councillors highlight the proposed date to their respective Parishes.

In response, the Assistant Director (Economic Development) undertook to take those concerns on board. Group or area meetings to discuss matters may be beneficial.

Councillor Auld agreed that meetings comprising two or three Parishes may indeed be of assistance.

Referring to the rolling five year supply of housing and the provision of 450 houses per annum, Councillor Oliver questioned how the Parishes could decide on such issues.

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) replied that the question formed part of the statutory consultation and the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) would address a number of related issues as part of his presentation.

Councillor Oliver expressed the view that it would appear that the Council would rather see barns falling into ruin than being converted.

In response, the Assistant Director (Economic Development) said that such issues/concerns might form part of consultation responses from the Parish Councils.

Councillor Allison suggested that copies of the joint presentation and Executive Summary be circulated to the Parish Councils.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) then gave a presentation on the Housing Need and Demand Study, outlining in some detail a number of aspects including the consultation undertaken; the current housing market; affordable housing; demographics; and other key findings.

He further presented details of the Housing Strategy 2011 – 2015 referring, in particular, to the three strategic housing priorities of balancing the housing market; decent and healthy homes; and supporting vulnerable people.

In conclusion he reported that, although the Strategy was not closed, it would be difficult to incorporate further views submitted after next Friday.

Councillor Holland commented that the Report and Executive Summary made very good reading. She drew attention to the Housing Need and Demand Study map at page 5 and questioned the manner by which a Parish Council would know how many houses should be provided. Councillor Holland felt that a breakdown of that information should be made available.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) emphasised the need to move forward in partnership, including sharing of all information and intelligence coming from communities. Statistics were, however, only part of the picture.

Councillor Auld indicated that it was important that the Parish Councils understood the issues. He also sought details of the numbers of empty properties in the rural area.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) undertook to respond in writing.

In response to a question from Councillor Ellis, the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) explained that “affordable” and “social” housing were not interchangeable. Mechanisms were in place to define affordable housing.

Councillor Ellis added that many of the figures quoted involved Registered Social Landlords as housing providers and that the presentation contained no information on social housing.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) acknowledged that there was an issue around good quality social housing being made available in rural communities.

Councillor Craig raised the issue of the East / West split as evidenced by the map on page 5. In response, the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) said that he had had discussions with the consultants and staff when the cost of housing in the east and west was recognised as an issue i.e. not just the size of the area.

RESOLVED – (1) That the joint presentation by the Assistant Director (Economic Development) and the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) be received.

(2) That copies of the joint presentation and the Executive Summary be circulated to the Parish Councils.

(3) That the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) provide details of the numbers of empty properties within the rural area to Councillor Auld in writing.

6. PARISH CHARTER REVIEW

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) introduced the Parish Charter Review Paper, the purpose of which was to provide all parties at the joint meeting with a suggested process for developing a new Parish Charter to cover the Carlisle District.

Councillor Mrs Geddes added that, as Community Engagement Portfolio Holder, she would be leading on the matter.

She outlined the background and current position, drawing attention to the Parish Charter from North Lincolnshire which had been recognised by the DCLG and NALC as a leading example of a successful Charter, a copy of which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. During initial discussions it had been agreed that a refreshed Carlisle District Charter should aspire to be a more streamlined document, which outlined the agreed core principles and behaviours of partnership working between Carlisle City Council and Carlisle District Parish Councils.

In essence, under the suggested Parish Charter arrangement, the relationship between the City Council and Parish Councils (as well as the support and services offered between each) would be clearly defined in a suite of documents consisting of two distinct layers:

- The Parish Charter itself would comprise a general commitment by the two tiers of local government to work closely in partnership, explore opportunities to improve services and community provision in parishes and support parish level decision making and accountability. The North Lincolnshire Parish Charter was suggested as a possible template and model for a refreshed Carlisle Parish Charter.

- That general Charter would then be supported by a set of jointly developed and agreed “Working Agreements” – limited and negotiated on an annual basis by both the City Council and Parishes. An initial suggested list of proposed services / areas where “Working Agreements” could be negotiated and agreed to cover 2012-13 was attached as Appendix 2.

Turning to delivery of the new Charter and working arrangements, the Portfolio Holder explained that currently the Carlisle District Parish Liaison Officer was employed by CALC to provide administrative support and advice to the CPCA. Accordingly the Liaison Officer already acted as an important conduit between the district and parish tiers of government, representing the interests of both. It was suggested that the Liaison Officer lead on the production of a new Parish Charter for Carlisle; and that a joint Working Group of nominees from the City and Parish Council be established.

The Portfolio Holder added that the City Council would be represented on the joint Working Group by Councillors Bloxham, Mrs Bowman and herself, and she looked forward to receiving nominations from the Parish Councils so that work could commence as soon as possible.

A draft Charter would be developed in consultation with that Group before being submitted for approval by the City Council / Parish Council Association’s Executives.

A timeline for the Charter Review Process was also provided.

The meeting was asked to consider the report and recommended process, and agree or amend the proposals so that formal work on developing a new Parish Charter could commence.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder was very pleased to have reached a point where work could commence on a much more compact Parish Charter. It would be good practice to move the matter forward as quickly as possible.

Councillor Auld thanked the Community Engagement Portfolio Holder for the review paper. He acknowledged the way forward and the need to progress the matter very quickly. To that end he would liaise directly with the Portfolio Holder on Parish representation on the Working Group.

The Leader added that, if possible, he would like the new Parish Charter to be complete by March 2012.

Mr Moth questioned whether the new working arrangements would effectively mean the end of the Rural Support Officer role (championed by the City Council).

In response, the Community Engagement Portfolio Holder advised that the Officer would still be in place, but in a different capacity.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) added that the CALC Parish Liaison Officer was working very closely in moving the matters forward generally.

Mr Moth stressed that the role of Rural Support Officer had been embodied within the past two Parish Charters and was vital to their success. It was important not to under estimate that unique role.

Councillor Auld emphasised the need to meet very soon with a view to progressing the various issues. He was anxious to ensure that the principles identified were not eroded, but carried forward in a sustainable manner.

RESOLVED – (1) That the process of reviewing the existing Charter in line with the above proposals be agreed.

(2) That the framework of a revised Charter and supporting Working Agreements as outlined above be agreed.

(3) That the Chairman of the Carlisle Parish Councils Association liaise directly with the Community Development Portfolio Holder regarding Parish representation on the joint Working Group.

(4) That the joint meeting recognised and accepted the need for the matter to progress as quickly as possible.

7. RURAL SUPPORT PROVISION

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) welcomed the opportunity to reassure all those present that the City Council was committed to rural support provision. He believed that the Council was moving towards a much stronger and transparent relationship with the Parishes. The Carlisle District Parish Liaison Officer had a desk next to the Housing Strategy Team here in the Civic Centre.

He wished to place on record appreciation of the great work undertaken by the Rural Support Officer. There was, however, a need to build on that work and move forward to a strong relationship.

In conclusion, the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) stated that it was important that the Council was made aware of any issues or concerns in order that those may be put right.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder understood the concerns expressed by Mr Moth during consideration of the previous item of business. Nevertheless support provision had to be delivered in a different way.

Councillor Auld reiterated that he was very anxious to move the issue forward in discussion.

RESOLVED – That the update be received.

8. GENERAL ISSUES

The Leader asked whether anyone wished to raise other issues in general.

Councillor Auld quoted from a letter which his wife had written to the Chief Executive concerning work planned by Cumbria in Bloom to mark the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. He paid tribute to the huge amount of work being undertaken by Parish volunteers and expressed the hope that the City Council would support the Cumbria in Bloom effort.

The Community Engagement Portfolio Holder advised that the challenge had already been taken up in Stanwix. The press had the day before reported that two teams of children had planted red, white and blue plants and refurbished a children's garden. She urged everyone to do their bit and not rely upon the Council.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder was sure that the letter would be given consideration. He added that resources were currently being made available to enable Parish Councils to obtain plants / bulbs at a reduced rate. Money may also be available via the County Council / Neighbourhood Forums.

The Leader added that City Councillors had their own budgets to assist local communities.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the dates of the meetings between the Executive and Parish Councils Association in 2012 be agreed as Monday 18 June (to be hosted by Carlisle Parish Councils Association) and Tuesday 4 December (to be hosted by the City Council).

(The meeting ended at 8.22 pm)