

Meeting Date: 3rd November 2020

Public/Private\*: Public

Title: **Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder's Report –  
Councillor Elizabeth Mallinson**

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### **CARLISLE AND EDEN FORCES LINK**

The project has continued to make good progress and will run until March 2021 with current funding. It is seeking to secure further funding to continue beyond this date. The project's work focuses on influencing, developing and connecting in support of the overall aim to increase opportunities and support for the Armed Forces.

Recent work includes:

- Meeting with North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group to support their work with delivering the covenant for staff and patients and enhance their commitment to the covenant
- Attending the Community Safety Partnership to enhance network opportunities and ensure that support for veterans is thought about in various settings
- Meeting with Lancashire Covenant hub to find out about their work and how they were set up
- Making connections with the charity Mind Over Mountains and exploring the opportunity of developing veteran specific walks to support mental health
- Connecting All Together Cumbria with Step Together. They are developing a strategic partnership to help with the development of Heathlands and a project at Haverigg. This connection is helping to develop the work with Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and local organisations to improve employment and training opportunities in Cumbria

### **ARMED FORCES COVENANT - FORTHCOMING LEGISLATION**

The Government intends to incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into legislation to bring a new duty which will require public bodies, including local authorities, to consider the Armed Forces community when developing policy, procedures and making decisions in three specified policy areas – healthcare, education and housing. The three policy areas are commonly raised as areas of concern by members of the Armed Forces Community. The aim of the legislation will be:

- To increase awareness of the unique obligations facing the Armed Forces Community and understanding of how these can affect their requirements of and ability to access key public services
- To embed this understanding in public sector decision-making for the policy, commissioning, and delivery of public services in relation to the Armed Forces community
- To encourage greater consideration for the Armed Forces Community in terms of service provision, where this is appropriate and possible
- To increase awareness of other relevant guidance and best practice

## **TRAINING: THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FOR FRONTLINE STAFF**

Armed Forces Covenant Training has been developed through our e-learning provider, Skillgate. This is aimed at front-line staff who engage with individuals and families on a regular basis. The training provides an overview of the unique challenges of Service life and how staff can help support the Armed Forces Community. It will help staff understand and apply the principles of the Covenant at a local level and includes sources of further information and support.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICES**

### Volumes

Customer Services have remained open throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic and have been working from home from 1<sup>st</sup> April. We have achieved the following (1<sup>st</sup> April to 5<sup>th</sup> October) :

- 63,288 Call have been taken
- 10,154 emails – Of which 99% have been responded to within 48 hrs

### Additional Services

Covid-19 has seen many Government initiatives to which Customer Services have been a first point of contact. These initiatives have seen call volumes increase by up to 300 calls per day. During this period the Council's call handling systems have been placed under significant pressure and at times this has led to increased waiting times due to the increased volumes of calls. Our customer services staff continue to work hard to ensure that waiting times are kept to a minimum and we ensure that callers receive the help and support they need.

The team has supported the delivery of the following initiatives:

- Small Business Grants
- Discretionary Business Grants
- Business Rates Relief
- Council Tax Relief
- Council Tax support

- Covid-19 enforcement on businesses
- Council Tax recovery

### Contact Centre

We reopened the Contact Centre for appointments only in August using an automated booking system designed by Customer Services. We have been ahead of the curve with this system compared to our neighbouring local authorities and have already had 40 successful appointments. The Contact Centre has been completely redesigned to be Covid secure with the addition of screens, hand sanitising stations and appropriate distancing between staff. The team have been separated into three 'bubbles' with the telephone functionality remaining at home. This provides as much resilience as possible should an outbreak occur. We have installed scanners to negate the need for paperwork to be handed between customers and staff to further reduce the risk of infection.

### Vulnerable Customers

We have developed a number of processes that allow our most vulnerable customer to access our key services:

- Supervisor Call Backs – When a customer is finding it difficult to access our services, either online or over the phone, our highly experienced Supervisors call customers for a one-to-one appointment. Typically, our Supervisors have been completing online forms on their behalf for anything from a new Benefit Claim and Council Tax Reduction Claim to ordering new bins. This has proven very successful as we have completed 26 since it was introduced. These are tailing off with the Contact Centre reopening in August
- We have developed an automated system that emails referrals through to the foodbank. Since April we have processed 183 referrals that have been delivered to those in need

### Phone System

To enable Customer Services to take calls from home, we implemented a new web-based phone system that was originally being tested for our response to flooding. We accelerated its rollout to ensure that we were available without a single day being lost. Customer Services has since assisted other departments in accessing this phone system so our busiest services can work from home and continue to provide valuable services with minimum disruption to the residents and businesses of Carlisle. The following departments are now able to effectively work from home and keep in contact with customers. Some of our specialist roles in Planning, Recovery and Business Rates also have a direct number to ensure we are contactable:

- Waste Services
- Council Tax Processing
- Business Rates

- Council & Business Rates Recovery
- Benefits & Council Tax Reduction
- Building Control
- Planning
- Economic Development

I cannot speak highly enough of the Customer Services Team. Every individual has displayed an outstanding work ethic and amazing resilience throughout this exceptionally challenging time, which has been fantastic to experience. I am proud to be part of that and have been humbled by each and every individual effort to keep our services running.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

During this last period the Council has continued to play a key role in community safety work, meeting with the other two Community Safety Partnerships and the Police and crime Commissioner to ensure good cooperation on important matters such as the increase in domestic abuse and child protection arrangements,

Partners are also engaged in the seven domestic homicide reviews currently active in Cumbria.

### **CARLISLE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) REVIEW AND UPDATE**

The current PSPO we have in operation in Carlisle will expire 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and accordingly we are now beginning the process of reviewing this important tool with a view updating our order and implementing the new arrangements. This review will include consultation with the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in December. Future Portfolio Holders reports will communicate the process for completing this important review.

### **DOMESTIC ABUSE PLACEMENTS IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION DURING COVID 19**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services have assisted:

- 34 households with emergency accommodation as a direct result of domestic abuse
- 65 households with community support as a direct result of domestic abuse

The service works closely with wider statutory and safeguarding partners to keep people safe, this has increased in frequency during the lockdown period, with weekly snapshot and comparative trend data being closely monitored and reported in order to ensure that capacity to assist appropriately is maintained.

### **COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURS**

Homelife's Community Neighbours volunteer telephone befriending project ended on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

A significant number of the volunteers would like to continue volunteering and we have obtained their consent to pass on their details to Age UK.

Legacies of the project include continuous improvement of our Homelife service to:

- Offer energy efficiency advice to Homelife clients
- Promote the benefits of Electricity North West 's Priority Services Register (PSR) in our area
- Either signpost or actively assist all our clients to sign up to the PSR
- Improved links and integration with health and social care
- Increase referrals for our services thereby offering more energy efficiency assistance and help combatting fuel poverty
- Offering holistic needs assessments to ensure our clients are linked to community services that are available locally. Homelife had been offering this to all service users referred to Community Neighbours and have decided that they continue with this, especially as people are particularly isolated at the moment with COVID regulations etc.

## **HEALTHY CITY TEAM**

### **Wraparound Support for Children and Young People**

The work of the Children and Young People's partnership is continuing following the work that took place in the summer holidays. The group is currently setting up provision for October half term holidays. Once again, there will hopefully be both a rural and urban offer for children and young people. The partnership is also keen to develop a strategic approach for the next three to five years as the basis for future funding bids.

### **Space to Talk**

We held a second 'Space to Talk' event in Carlisle City Centre on 11<sup>th</sup> September, with a total of about 150 people being listened to. A third City Centre event is planned for 16<sup>th</sup> October and the vision now is to develop this model as part of wider action to create healthier communities as we navigate Covid recovery. The partnership plans to reach out further by:

- Holding events with local Community Centres, Secondary Schools and Universities
- Training will be offered to Parish Councillors so they can develop their listening skills to support their own communities
- Training volunteers from within school communities so as they progress through their school careers, they can transfer listening skills to those coming behind them, to provide sustainable wider support available for young people
- Reaching out and listening to unemployed people, through local unemployment centres
- Extending events to involve large employers

We have been delighted by the response to the initiative and have already been approached by other interested parties who would like to become part of this community well-being model.

We have kept the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy Implementation Group updated on the success of the approach.

### **Cumbria Healthy Weight Partnership**

The Cumbria Healthy Weight Partnership has also recently met and the partnership will be starting further work in regards to the amendments to the Healthy Weight Declaration which the City Council is a signatory to.

### **Active Spaces**

#### **Hammonds Pond Play Area Refurbishment**

A month-long consultation on new play equipment to be installed at Hammonds Pond in Upperby has recently ended. Residents were asked to provide feedback on their preferred types of equipment to be installed and this could be done online or via paper forms at the park cafe, local primary schools were also invited to participate. The response rate to this survey has been very high, with over 400 responses received in the first week alone. The data generated from the consultation is being assessed and will be used to guide the production of tender documents to be distributed to suppliers this winter, these works will be funded by Section 106 monies from a local development.