

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2013 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Bowman (Chairman), Councillors Graham, J Mallinson (as substitute for Councillor Mitchelson), Nedved, Watson and Whalen

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Bradley – Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Martlew – Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder
Councillor Weber – Observer

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Economic Development
Director of Local Environment
Director of Resources
Highways Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Policy and Performance Officer

EEOSP.68/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bowditch and Mitchelson

EEOSP.69/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Graham, Mallinson, Watson and Whalen declared an interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.3 – Highways Claimed Rights. The interest related to the fact that they were elected Members of Cumbria County Council.

EEOSP.70/13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2013 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

(2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2013 be noted.

EEOSP.71/13 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

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

EEOSP.72/13 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman advised that Agenda Item A.4 – Budget 2014/15-2018/19 would be moved to the end of the agenda, following the items in Part B, to facilitate Officer and Member working time.

EEOSP.73/13 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.27/13 which provided an overview of matters related to the work of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Details of the latest version of the work programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Panel were also included.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that:

- The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 18 October 2013. The following issues fell within the remit of this Panel:

KD.028/13 – Interim Arrangements for the provision of Green Box Kerbside Collection – the item was on the agenda for consideration later in the meeting.

KD.030/13 – Budget Process 2014/15 - Items within the remit of the Panel would be considered later in the meeting.

- Since publication of the Agenda a further Notice of Key Decisions had been published on 15 November 2013. Only one item fell within the remit of this Panel:

KD.034/13 – Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation – Stage Two. Members agreed that the item should be included in the Work Programme for consideration at their meeting on 16 January 2014.

- There were no references from the Executive following their meeting on 28 October 2013.

There was one reference from the Executive following their meeting on 18 November 2013 which related to the Budget 2014/15. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that she had a draft copy of the Minute Excerpt if Members wished to see it.

- Work Programme – The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the current work programme. The Officer explained that:

- The item on the University of Cumbria would be removed from the work programme as it would be covered by the item on the Carlisle Economic Partnership which would be considered by the Panel at their meeting on 27 February 2014. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that he was working on invitations of relevant Members of the Local Economic Partnership to that meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel be noted.

(2) That the item on the Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation – Stage Two. Members be included in the Work Programme for consideration at their meeting on 16 January 2014.

(3) The item on the University of Cumbria be removed from the work programme as it would be covered by the item on the Carlisle Economic Partnership which would be considered by the Panel at their meeting on 27 February 2014.

EEOSP.74/13 CLAIMED RIGHTS UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jonathon Smith and Mr Michael Foster from Cumbria County Council to the meeting.

The Director of Local Environment presented report LE.35/13 which had been prepared to advise and update Members on issues related to the Council's former service. The Director explained that, over the past couple of years, broad consultation had taken place across the City Council to decide the future of the Claimed Rights service which the City Council had been operating since 2001. The matter had been considered by the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2012 prior to the Executive making their decision in October 2012 to hand the Highways Claimed Rights service back to the County Council on 31 March 2013. That decision was endorsed by the City Council on 13 November 2012.

Following that decision Officers began to prepare detailed plans in consultation with the County Council for the handover of the service on 31 March 2013, and the Director outlined the main issues considered at that time. In order to progress the issue a Joint Members' Group was set up to consider the range of issues and was supported by an Officer Group. Details of the discussions were appended to the report, which demonstrated that most issues had been satisfactorily resolved. Work was still ongoing in respect of a small number of issues, details of which were provided.

It was subsequently agreed with the County Council that twenty seven members of City Council staff would transfer to the County Council and four members of staff would be retained to provide a range of City services. Regular briefing meetings with City Council, County Council and Union representatives were held to ease concerns and enable staff to voice their concerns and receive responses on specific issues. Elected Members were also kept informed of progress.

The Director of Local Environment further outlined for Members a number of issues which still needed to be finally resolved, together with the latest situation in respect of those issues.

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

- *The Chairman thanked the City Engineer for the report which was easy to understand and included relevant comments. The Chairman hoped that the report could be used as a template for future reporting.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder stated that the transfer of Highways Claimed Rights had been a major piece of work involving both policies and people. A good working relation with the County Council had ensured the transfer of staff went as smoothly as it could and she hoped that the two Councils could continue to work in that manner.

- *What was the current position in respect of the residual agreement? Who would monitor the agreement once it was signed?*

The agreement had been considered by the two legal departments and was currently close to being finalised. The Director of Local Environment advised that she would be

responsible for monitoring the agreement as the residual areas fell closely within her remit in respect of highway work undertaken by the City Council.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder reminded Members that the City council had an extra member on the County Council's Highways and Transport Working Group who would monitor how matters were progressing.

It was agreed that an update report would be submitted to the Panel six months after the signing of the agreement then twelve months thereafter.

Members then considered the Appendix to the report on the progress to date.

Item 1 – Highway Maintenance – Issues resolved

Item 2 – City (Footway and Amenity) Lighting

- *Had performance been maintained following transfer?*

The Highways Manager explained that it had taken time for staff to settle into their posts but they were now working well.

- *The County council was taking on some of the work. Had that been accounted for in the City Council's budget?*

The Highways Manager confirmed that was the case and that Officers would monitor to determine whether that budget was sufficient.

- *Where was the workforce based?*

Mr Smith advised that some were based at Skirsgill in Penrith while the engineers were based in Dalston and Brampton.

- *What was the timescale for the repair of lights? The Member had been told of instances where lights had been broken for long periods. How was that being addressed?*

Mr Smith explained that the timescales depended on the cause of the fault. If it was a bulb then it would be replaced immediately using the find and fix approach or as part of routine maintenance. If the County council could not resolve the issue, for example if the fault was underground, then defects could take longer to resolve. Mr Smith believed it was important in such circumstances that people were kept informed of the situation.

Item 3 – City Winter Maintenance

- *Who was responsible for gritting the car parks? There was a concern that if there was a sudden cold spell the car parks would not be gritted.*

The Highways Manager advised that he had met with County Council colleagues to discuss the issue. Car parks were not normally gritted and it was hoped that gritters would be called in as required.

The Highways Manager added that under normal circumstances the footpaths in the car parks were gritted by the cleaning staff using salt provided by the County Council. He

noted that the County Council had undertaken trials of a brine liquid and results of the trials were awaited.

- *It was useful to note that when staff could not carry out their normal duties due to adverse weather conditions they would be utilised in other duties.*
- *Who made the decision on prioritising gritting in rural and urban areas?*

Mr Smith advised that each household had received a winter driving leaflet. That included a map that outlined the priorities for treatments. The matter was decided by the Highways and Transport Working Group and the final decisions on which areas would be treated was dependent upon the weather forecast taken at midday.

Item 4 – Highway Verges and Tree Maintenance

The Highways Manager advised that there were still some minor areas to be agreed. Most areas were clear but where it was not Officers would meet on site discuss the issue.

Item 5 – Weed Control

- *Members were disappointed with the level of weed control over the past year. The Panel sought an assurance that that situation would not arise again.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder agreed with Members' comments. She stated that the City Council had a contractor that could have undertaken the work and passed the cost to the County Council.

- *Members also sought assurance that dirt would be cleaned from areas to discourage the growth of weeds. A deep clean was required.*

The Portfolio Holder agreed that the County Council should contribute to the clean up as the weeds that were not attended to this year would increase next year.

- *Treatment of weeds should start in early July and not the end of August to the end of September as a Member had been notified.*
- *The issue of weed control should not have been transferred to the County Council. The Green Spaces Team were adept at doing that job. The evidence of weed control would be seen over the coming year but the Member was not convinced that the work would be done any better than the Green Spaces team could have done.*

The Director of Local Environment agreed that for this year it would have made more sense for the City council to have done the work. The Green Spaces Team had gained a lot of experience over the years and knew what they were doing. The County council would have to go through a similar learning process but the Director believed that the situation would be better next year. If there was a mistake on street cleaning a member of staff could go out and clean up the affected area quickly. Weed control was not like that and it took months to resolve issues.

- *Did weed control chemicals need to be diluted under Health and Safety guidance?*

The Director of Local Environment advised that the situation was the same for City and County Councils. Chemicals used in the past were more effective but were harmful to the environment.

The Portfolio Holder believed that lessons will have been learned and acknowledged that a lot had happened in a short space of time. She was sure that the situation would be improved next year.

- *The County Council should be prepared for seasonal problems such as weeds in summer, leaves in autumn and ice in winter.*

Mr Foster advised that there had been discussion with the contractor who had agreed that they would return next year to carry out the work.

- *Members and Officers would continue to monitor the situation over the coming year.*

Item 6 – Plant Vehicles and Equipment – No issues

Item 7 – Training and Development – No issues

Item 8 – Festive Lighting – No issues

Item 9 – Gulley Maintenance

- *There were a lot of problems in Castle Ward from blocked drains. What was being done to resolve the matter?*

Mr Smith explained that problems should be reported to the Highways Hotline and would be dealt with through the routine cleaning programme and the reactive programme. He acknowledged that there could be more problems in autumn but the County Council could deal with them.

- *Blocked gulleys were a problem in rural areas as well as urban areas. In some cases unblocking was not enough as the problem was due to structural problems. Nothing was done to resolve those issues. Some areas such as north and east of Longtown experience more severe weather and blocked gulleys could lead to water on the road which would turn to ice in freezing in certain conditions.*

Item 10 – Emergency Callouts – No issues

Item 11 – Relocation of Staff – No issues

Item 12 – Land Drainage/Flooding

- *Parts of the City were still prone to flooding. What was being done to monitor and resolve the issues?*

Mr Smith explained that the County council was the local lead flood authority and they had a small team that looked at and planned for those areas. They continued to monitor any flooding in those areas.

The Highways Manager advised that the County and City Councils were working together on the matter and had met with Councillors and Parish Council representatives. That was a new system but showed a lot of promise.

Item 13 – Flooding

- *The report stated that there was no need for sandbags. Some areas were still at risk and had no flood protection. Where would people get sandbags if required?*

The Highways Manager advised that some properties that were prone to flooding had been given sandbags which could be reused. Therefore those properties should still have those sandbags. Schemes had been available in the past to allow people to purchase flood protection devices.

- *In an emergency situation sandbags were still required. What arrangements were in place for such emergencies?*

Mr Smith advised that the County Council's responsibility was to protect the highway infrastructure and not properties. The Highways Manager advised that the City Council had no provision to prepare or deliver sandbags.

- *Some properties were still vulnerable and whilst he accepted that some properties had reusable sandbags that did not always happen. If there was some sand available it could be put into bags. It would be a low cost solution and could be essential to some properties.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that sandbags had no effect in the floods in 2005. There was a practical difficulty as they were heavy and the elderly would find it difficult to move them into position. If they had been stored outside and become wet they would be even heavier.

- *Sandbags were often ineffective but for a small level of water they could be useful. However flooding was often caused by water coming up through vents and through the sewage system. Sandbags would be of no use under those circumstances. People could find out if they were in an area likely to flood and purchase flood protection devices.*

The Portfolio Holder believed that if a person knew they lived in an area that was prone to flooding sandbags could give them some confidence that the flooding of their homes could be delayed.

- *Was the solution to the issue a self-help or a standby matter?*

The Highway Engineer believed that the matter was a self-help issue as people had been given assistance in the past and should take responsibility for their own properties.

Item 14 – Highways and Transport Working Group

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that she and Councillor Mrs Stevenson were the City Council representatives on the Highway and transport Working Group. However she was frustrated that they were able to put forward issues that were then discussed at the Local Committee which they did not take part.

- *Other City Councillors who were also County Councillors should ensure that City issues were taken up in those circumstances.*

Item 15 – Bridleways and Footpaths and Public Rights of Way – No issues

Item 16 – Street name Plates/Bus Stops

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that she was meeting with a local bus company to try to work for the future of residents. She agreed that £5,000 was not a lot of money but added that the bus companies were the financial beneficiaries and therefore they should look after the bus shelters.

- *That was another example of good joint working. Councillor Mallinson was also attending the meeting with the bus company with the Portfolio Holder and would push them to pick up their responsibilities.*

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that she would report on progress at a future Council meeting.

Item 17 – Retained Engineering Resources – No issues

Item 18 – Capital Works – No issues

Item 19 – Non-HCR Works – No issues

Item 20 – Insurance – the Director of Local Environment confirmed that insurance had been included in the budget.

Item 21 – Service Standards – The Director of Local Environment advised that information on service standards could be obtained from the County Council in future.

Item 22 – Support Services – No issues

Item 23 – Contact Centre

- *A Task and finish Group on neighbourhood working had recommended that there should be one point of contact for City and County Councils. Had there been any progress on that?*

The Director of Local Environment advised that the County Council now had a hotline and there were less calls coming into the City Council.

- *There had been problems with the County Council but it was now much improved. Calls to the City Council would reduce over time.*

Mr Foster explained that information was fed back to the customer on via the hotline if they had requested it. Some people were frustrated that they did not receive feedback but had not requested it.

The Chairman thanked Officers from the County council for their time and input which had cleared up a number of concerns.

RESOLVED: (1) That Report LE.35/13 –Claimed Rights Update be noted.

(2) That a report on the Residual Agreement be submitted to the Panel six months after signing and twelve months thereafter.

(3) That issues in respect of weed control would be monitored over the coming year.

EEOSP.75/13 BOTCHERGATE AND WIDER PUBLIC REALM

The Director of Economic Development presented Report ED.40/13 outlining the actions contained in the Botchergate Conservation Area Management Plan and wider public realm issues in Carlisle. She reminded Members that the Botchergate Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan was adopted in July 2012 and included three strands of work, namely Conservation Area Review, Public Realm Improvements and Protection of Historic Fabric.

The Conservation Area Review was executed at the end of 2012 and the new boundary had now been established.

The Director of Economic Development summarised for Members the public realm improvements in respect of signage and street clutter, general public realm improvements and street furniture.

In terms of the protection of historic fabric a number of improvements had been made to the built environment in Botchergate, largely by private initiative, since 2012. The former Sherwood Hotel on Botchergate had been comprehensively refurbished at first and second storey, with shop front refurbishment proposed for 2014. On the adjacent corner of Tait Street, the Shaha restaurant had had its upper floor windows replaced. A small sum was allocated from Conservation funds to facilitate an improved specification on Botchergate.

Enforcement activity remained ongoing against a variety of breaches of listed building consent, advertisement consent and breaches of planning regulations.

The Director advised that a workshop the previous day had informed Members of the Public Realm and the importance of Botchergate as a gateway into the City. The key issue from the workshop was partnership working with the County Council and work on de-cluttering which would improve the environment. Officers in Economic Development were working with Officers in Local Environment on cleanliness and planting and were looking to work with the private sector on improving individual buildings.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder advised that it was important to consider the potential and intended move by the County Council to re-locate their headquarters into the Botchergate area. The City council would work closely on the plans and believed that it would be senseless to make financial commitments until those plans were clear. There had been some public sector investment in the area and a number of shops had opened in the area. The Portfolio Holder stated that she travelled through the area twice per day and would monitor the area.

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

- *Members were disappointed that the focus had been taken away from Botchergate which was the prime focus for people. A workshop held 18 months ago had determined that people wanted the area de-cluttered but nothing had happened. The delay now was waiting for funding from the County Council for the de-cluttering.*

The Director of Economic Development advised that the emphasis had not changed but that the gateway was being looked at as a whole. With regard to de-cluttering that was the responsibility of the County Council.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder was a Member of the Task and Finish Group and she explained that when looking at the Public Realm it defined the area in quality and detail. She acknowledged that de-cluttering was a problem but it also gave the opportunity to get the signage right for the future. There had to be less, but better quality, signage including better signage to car parks.

The Portfolio Holder believed that the opportunity had been missed recently to replace the barriers in Botchergate with something more in keeping with the area. The Botchergate area would be included in the City Centre Masterplan and linked closely with the future Local Plan as it was seen as part of the City Centre. The focus had been on the area between the railway station and the City Centre. Improvements in Botchergate had to be a partnership between the public and private sectors. Botchergate had deteriorated over the years and an increase in the number of pubs and takeaways which had resulted in it having an unfortunate reputation. The City Centre Masterplan was trying to create a vision of what Botchergate could look like which was very important for the perception of people coming into Carlisle along Botchergate. The Council needed to encourage the private sector to do more in the area and to protect the area and develop it in a sympathetic manner.

- *The Task and Finish Group had submitted a report to the Executive a year ago and most of the recommendations were small enhancements which would not cost a lot to implement. There was still an issue with billboards and bollards.*

The Director of Economic Development advised that Officers would look at the recommendations again but many of the issues were highways issues and therefore would be part of the County Council review.

RESOLVED: (1) That Report ED.40/13 – Botchergate and Wider Public Realm be noted.

(2) That a further report be submitted in six months following conclusion of the budget cycle at the County Council.

EEOSP.76/13 QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/14

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted report PC.19/13 updating the Panel on the Council's service standards which helped measure performance and customer satisfaction. Also included were updates on key actions contained within the 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 considered by Overview and Scrutiny Panels at earlier meetings.

The Policy and Performance Officer added that the report had been reviewed by the Senior Management Team at their meeting on 29 October 2013 and would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels at their respective meetings in November.

There were two new service standards relating to the Panel – street cleaning and waste services. An online web survey line would continue to provide information on those

issues. The Policy and Performance Officer advised that planning permission for the gypsy and traveller transit was on target.

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

- *The report stated that the Prospectus for Carlisle was expected in October. What was the current position on the Prospectus?*

The Director of Economic Development explained that a draft prospectus had been produced and was now going through a second draft stage which would be circulated. The document would be used by both public and private sector and would include the branding from the Sense of Place and the Carlisle Story.

- *The report stated that the prospectus had been commissioned. Was there a cost involved?*

The Director of Economic Development advised that the prospectus was part of the Sense of Place and was included in that budget.

RESOLVED: (1) That Report PC.19/13 – Quarter Two Performance Report 2013-14 be noted.

PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph numbers (as indicated in brackets against the minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

EEOSP.77/13 CAR PARKING UPDATE

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 3)

The Director of Local Environment presented Report LE.31/13 providing an update on car park use and income since the implementation of a new charging structure in February 2011. The Director reminded Members of the background and implementation of the new charging policy in February 2012.

Since that date Officers had attempted to implement the recommendations made by the consultant and the progress was included within the report. One of the recommendations was in respect of a Pay by Phone service which was introduced in May 2012. The service was expected to grow as it provided a convenient way of parking for those using mobiles and smart phones. Officers proposed to discuss with local businesses how visitors could be made more aware of the service and the advantages it could have for them.

The Director further provided details of ticket sales and income for the various car parks since the charging structure was amended.

The information within the report indicated that car park usage was still continuing to fall with little indication of a change in the rate of fall. That appeared to be a trend across the

country and probably reflected the economic situation and changes to how people shopped.

There appeared to be a small increase in income compared to the same time last year and the present categorisation of car parks appeared to be generally correct.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that Officers would actively be marketing the Pay by Phone option and staff would be on site to assist people. The current system inhibited people who wished to extend their stay. The Pay by Phone system sent a text message to remind the user that the time paid for was soon to expire and gave the opportunity to extend that time. The Portfolio Holder believed that the system would improve as more people used it.

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

- *There had been a lot of development around the periphery of the City Centre that allowed free parking. That led to competition to the retail sector in the City Centre.*

The Portfolio Holder believed that the biggest threat to the City Centre retail was the increase in internet shopping which would also have an impact on car parking.

The Director of Economic Development explained that there had also been changes in retailing in general. However the City Centre Masterplan would deal with the longer term issues.

- *There was the opportunity for cheaper contract parking on Devonshire Walk.*

The Portfolio Holder believed that the high rope development in Bitts Park would attract people into the City and there was the opportunity for directional signage to Devonshire Walk car park.

- *If people only worked part of the week was there the opportunity to purchase contract only for those days?*

The Director of Local Environment explained that there was a flexible offer with block and long term deals available which provided good value for money.

- *The car park at the retail park on London Road was always busy as people were shopping there. That could be a problem for a number of retailers in the City Centre. The Council needed to encourage people to come into the City Centre but retailers had to be involved.*

The Portfolio Holder advised that when events are held in the City Centre people come in and park. However there had to be partnership working between the Council and the retailers to make the City Centre an attractive place where people would be entertained.

- *Recommendations had been made previously regarding free parking in the City Centre but acknowledged that there would be issues with that suggestion. Stores could also take part in a voucher type scheme where a discount could be given on purchases in store when a car parking ticket had been purchased.*

The Director of Local Environment explained that the car parks provided good spaces, value for money and were monitored and safe. Car parking charges had been frozen for the last three years. It had recently been introduced that parking would be free on Thursdays after 3:00pm during the Christmas period. Car parking provided an important income stream for the Council and a careful balance had to be maintained to support economic growth and provide good quality parking.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder reminded Members that there was a history of people parking outside of the City Centre and walking into work. Residents parking zones had been provided in some areas as it had become impossible for residents to park.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that Officers would contact those retailers to ensure the parking was polices on their sites.

- *The County Council were currently consulting on on-street parking and that could have a beneficial impact on the car parks.*
- *The cost of car parking could be an issue for people who were coming into town for a coffee. It was not so much of an issue if people were coming to do a large amount of shopping.*

RESOLVED: (1) That Report LE.31/13 – Car Parking Update be noted.

(2) That Panel hoped that the Portfolio Holder and Director would include the observations and suggestions in their decisions on car parking in future.

EEOSP.78/13 INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF GREEN BOX (GLASS AND PAPER) KERBSIDE COLLECTION

The Director of Local Environment presented Report LE.37/13 setting out details of interim arrangements for the provision of Green Box Kerbside Collections.

Details of the current collection arrangements; together with the options available to the Council were provided.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.149/13), considered the matter and decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Approved the proposal to carry out the procurement for an interim short-term contract for green box recycling of glass, cans and plastic pending the outcome of the wider review of the waste and recycling service delivery.
2. Agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Local Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to undertake the necessary procurement for up to one year with potential to extend for one further year.”

The Director of Local Environment advised that Officers had looked at changes in waste services nationally over the past twelve months. Options available could make it easier for people to get more involved and productivity to increase.

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

- *It had been suggested that a Working Group could be set up to look at Waste Services. Members sought an assurance that the Panel would be given the opportunity to scrutinise any proposals before a final decision was made by the Executive.*
- *Had ideas been sought from other Councils? Some Councils recycled food waste and textiles which would improve performance.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that the Strategic Waste partnership were running a pilot scheme regarding recycling.

RESOLVED: (1) That Report LE.37/13 – Interim Arrangements For The Provision Of Green Box (Glass And Paper) Kerbside Collection be noted.

(2) That the Panel agreed that a Working Group be established to take the work forward.

The meeting moved back into public for the remainder of the meeting.

EEOSP.79/13 BUDGET 2014-15 TO 2018/19

Revenue Budget Reports

(a) Summary of New Revenue Spending Pressures

The Director of Resources submitted Report RD.53/13 summarising the new revenue spending pressures and reduced income projections which needed to be considered as part of the 2014/15 budget process. The issues were to be considered in the light of the Council's corporate priorities.

The Director advised that clearly all of the pressures could not be accommodated within existing resources (including the use of reserves) and decisions would need to be made throughout the budget process to limit pressures to high priority and unavoidable issues to ensure that a balanced budget position was recommended to Council in February 2014.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.134/13), received the report and forwarded it to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget consultation process.

Members gave consideration to the following new revenue spending pressures and reduced income which fell within the area of responsibility of the Panel:

- **Car Parking Income Shortfall**
The Charges Report (LE.30/13) considered elsewhere on the agenda highlighted the fact that car parking income was again falling short of budgetary targets. That pressure reflected the anticipated income as highlighted in the Charges Report.
- **New Homes Refuse and Recycling Scheme**
There was a requirement to provide refuse collection and at least two types of kerbside recycling and, with the growing demand on the service due to new housing development, that pressure reflected the additional cost of providing the service.
- **Plastic and Card Recycling Income Shortfall**

The value of recyclates had dropped therefore achieving the current budgeted level of income was not going to be possible.

- **Rapid Response Team**

Related to the continuation of the non-recurring Clean Up Carlisle pressure agreed as part of the 2012/13 budget process.

- **Green Box Recycling Income Shortfall**

The value of recyclates had dropped as a result of which it would not be possible to achieve the current budgeted level of income. That, doubled with a reduction in the amount of recyclates presented at the kerbside, had resulted in the pressure.

- **Development Control Income Shortfall**

The Charges Report (ED.35/13) considered elsewhere on the agenda highlighted the fact that income from development control would not meet the MTFP target. The pressure reflected the anticipated income as highlighted in the Charges Report.

- **Enterprise Centre Rental Income Shortfall**

The income achieved from the Enterprise Centre was falling short of the budgetary target and that pressure reflected the shortfall.

- **Local Plan Inquiry**

The pressure would provide funding to undertake the required inquiries into proposals laid out in the Local Plan.

- **Bring Sites Recycling Income Shortfall**

The value of recyclates had dropped therefore achieving the current budgeted level of credit income from the County Council would not be possible. It was anticipated that the pressure could be offset by additional income generated from the sale of recyclates when the bring sites service was brought back in house in April 2014. The additional income was included in Report RD.54/13 elsewhere on the agenda.

RESOLVED – That Report RD.53/13 be noted.

(b) Summary of New Savings Proposals and Additional Income

Report RD.54/13 had been circulated to the Panel by way of background information.

The Director of Resources summarised the proposed savings in relation to the Invest to Save Scheme; New Transformation Savings Required; together with the additional income projection in respect of Bring Sites Recyclate income.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.135/13), considered the report and decided:

“1. That the proposed reductions to the base budget from 2014/15 onwards, as set out in Report RD.54/13, be received and forwarded to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels for consideration as part of the budget consultation process.

2. That it be noted that the Senior Management Team would continue to investigate efficiencies and savings in accordance with the Transformational Savings Strategy.”

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

- *How confident were Officers that the required 40-45 people would apply for voluntary redundancy.*

The Director of Resources advised that as it was voluntary it was not known at the present time what the take up would be. The County Council had carried out a similar exercise requiring 300 voluntary redundancies in the first year and had achieved 200 applications to date. It was anticipated that at least 30-35 people would request redundancy but a definite figure would be available by the end of December.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that had been advised about the voluntary redundancies through briefings held by the Chief Executive. There had been a significant number of enquiries for figures which were being dealt confidentially by HR.

- *How easy will it be to get the right people to volunteer? Members would prefer the redundancies to be voluntary but if there was insufficient take-up compulsory redundancies could be considered.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder reminded Members that it would be the post that was being removed rather than the person. The Council had frontline services to deliver and therefore the posts would be scrutinised to ensure that the loss of that post would be possible without impacting on services.

- *What would happen if a post was deleted but the person concerned did not wish to take redundancy?*

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that if someone had asked for figures then that could be taken as an indication that the person felt that their post could be made redundant. That would need to be considered by the Directorate before a final decision by the Senior Management Team. Some requests for redundancy would be straightforward and some would not.

- *Had the staff been asked for their suggestions for making savings?*

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that staff had been asked for suggestions on a number of occasions.

- *How would services be retained if there were fewer staff following redundancies?*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder believed that it would be difficult but it could be done.

- *The Council had delivered gold star services in the past. Staff numbers would be reduced but a good service would still be delivered.*

The Deputy Chief Executive believed that it would be challenging but senior Officers were mindful of that and would not overload teams as that could lead to stress related sickness. Directors were aware of the potential problems but there was no alternative as savings had to be achieved.

RESOLVED – That Report RD.53/13 be noted.

(c) Review of Charges 2014/15

Report LE.30/13 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 relative to the services falling within the responsibility of the Local Environment Directorate.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.129/13), decided:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges as set out in Report LE.30/13 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact of those charges on income generation, as detailed within the report.”

- **City Centre Events Charges**

In view of the current economic climate, it was proposed to retain the current charge levels for 2014/15 as set out in Option 1, Table 1 to help maintain demand and the current budgeted level of revenue. Based upon anticipated usage, the proposed charges in Table 1 for 2014/15 would still meet the MTFP budget target requirement of £26,200. The charges had not increased since 2009 and the Executive may wish to consider increasing the charges as set out in Option 2, which introduced 3 categories of promotion (small promotions consisting of one vehicle or canopy; medium promotions consisting of 2 vehicles, canopies; large promotions were vehicles over 7.5 tons or multiple vehicles/canopies).

- **Car Parking**

A new charging structure for car parks had been introduced in March 2012 under which car parks were grouped into four categories to reflect the varying demand from users for each car park. No increases in charges had been made since that time, and the existing charges for each category of car park; together with proposed amendments to special event charges to reflect the daily charge for parking; and car park ticket sales were set out at Section 3.2 of the report.

The revised charging structure also included the introduction of Pay by Phone facilities. Table 3a showed that such measures had not prevented a continuing decline in Pay and Display ticket sales, although the introduction of Pay by Phone had helped. The ticket sales from car parks had declined by an average of 11% over the last 2 years.

Although the uptake of Pay by Phone increased every month, it still only represented a minor element of ticket sales and income. For many shoppers, who were uncertain how long they may wish to stay, the use of Pay by Phone provided an opportunity to extend the parking duration without the inconvenience of having to return to the car as extended duration could easily be purchased. Officers in conjunction with local businesses planned to make users more aware of the advantages of that option in the hope that sales could be increased and that businesses benefitted from the flexibility that the option offered their customers.

The report also provided details of the existing Contract Parking Permit (Saver Parking Permits) charges and, as there were no proposals to change the standard parking charges, it was proposed that the contract parking charges remain unchanged.

It was further proposed to introduce a new charge of £6.00 per day for Builders Permits into the car parking scheme.

The summary of the car park ticket income over the last 2 years for the first 6 months of each year showed that the situation was more optimistic than with ticket sales. Overall income had increased by 1.2% in the past 12 months but still showed an overall fall of 6.3% over the last 2 years. If that improvement was sustained it may indicate the start of an upward trend. The economic situation had not yet shown much improvement and there was evidence to suggest that increasing charges would trigger a fall in car park usage. It was therefore proposed that charges remain unchanged for another year as set out in Table 2, at which time data would be available on whether the recovery in income had accelerated making an increase in charges more justifiable.

- **Parks and Green Spaces**

Charging for the use of parks and green spaces was introduced in 2012/13, with a category for low key commercial use being introduced in 2013/14. It was proposed that the MTFP requirement of 3.8% be applied to each charge, as detailed in Table 5 of the report.

With regard to low key commercial use, the intention was that Council Officers should have discretion to waive or reduce charges in circumstances where a commercial operator was needed in order to provide a catering service as part of a City Council run event. That responsibility was currently delegated to the Director of Local Environment. A sliding scale of charges was recommended for fun fairs.

- **Talkin Tarn**

In last year's Charges Review a proposal for implementing a new charging structure was put forward, and a compromise reached, as detailed in Table 9. It was proposed that those charges should remain for 2014/15. As a product the Talkin Tarn Membership was still in a developmental phase, and it was therefore proposed that the charge should remain at £52.00 per year.

The Business Plan for Talkin Tarn sought to generate income wherever it was feasible and safe to do so. Other charges currently prevalent at Talkin Tarn were outlined in Table 10. Charges had been increased in line with the MTFP requirement with the exception of fishing permits and swimming registration.

- **Public Health and Clean Neighbourhoods**

Central Government determined the range of fines for Fixed Penalty Notices, the fines issued by the City Council being the same as in 2013/14. Shopping trolley and Waste Transfer Note FPN offences had been added to the fees and charges for 2014/15.

- **Waste Services**

It was proposed to increase the charge for bulky waste items by £1 per 5 items to £18.

It was further proposed that the annual charge for clinical waste collections be deleted from the charging structure; the developer charge for new and replacement Euro bins be increased in line with the MTFP requirement; the charge for a 240 litre refuse or garden waste bin should increase; a new charge for replacement gull sacks be introduced; and the option of a reconditioned bin be offered to customers.

There were two facets to the Special Collections service, i.e. bulky waste collections and fixtures and fittings. In the event that Option 1 from Table 11 was chosen for bulky waste collections, each item on the fixtures and fittings list should have a 3.8% increase applied, as shown in Table 13.

- **Summary of Income**

With the exception of Talkin Tarn, the income from which was ring-fenced, acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £2,415,000 against the MTFP target of £2,593,000. That represented a shortfall of £178,000 against the MTFP target.

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

- *What was the current occupancy rate at the Enterprise Centre? And could the Business Interaction Centre have an effect on the Enterprise Centre?*

The Director of Economic Development advised that the occupancy was approximately 60% which had not changed over the last twelve months. The biggest issue was that after businesses had been set up they were not moving on. That issue had to be addressed. The Director of Economic Development explained that the Business Interaction Centre offered a different service to the Enterprise Centre with more creative digital business support.

- *Better use could be made of the meeting room at the Enterprise Centre which could increase income.*

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder explained that new businesses were encouraged to move into the Enterprise Centre and the Economic Development Officer had been successful in that respect.

- *Members acknowledged that there were problems with the Enterprise Centre and queried whether it was feasible to continue with low occupancy figures. There would come a point where Officers would need to look at doing something else with part of the building.*
- *Cumbria had a low level of business start up and there were problems with the Enterprise Centre. Pressure should be put onto Government to do more to assist new businesses.*

The Director of Economic Development explained that the Council were trying to do more through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a number of projects were being introduced. The Council had worked in partnership with the University to develop the Business Interaction Centre which would support small businesses but there needed to be a push by the LEP.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder advised that a meeting of the Carlisle Economic partnership had been held that morning involving both public and private sector. The Partnership was aware of the needs of Carlisle and were working on ideas to ensure the public and private sectors to coordinate plans to enable them to put forward bids for funding which at present had to be submitted through the LEP.

- *In respect of City Centre changes the report offered two options including larger commercial promotions.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that Members were looking at the options seriously and that there had been a healthy interest for large promotions within the City Centre.

- *There was disparity between the performance report on waste services and the budgetary report.*

The Director of Local Environment advised that it was dependent upon when the figures were reported. The Council were currently on target to meet income targets and were proposing to increase the charge for removal of bulky items to £18 which was an increase of £1. That was still a lower charge than some other districts. If the Council did not provide the service there would probably be an increase in the level of fly-tipping.

- *Would the proposed charge for replacement gull sacks be workable?*

The Director of Local Environment advised that only the cost of replacing and delivering a gull sack was passed on to the householder.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report LE.30/13 be welcomed.

(2) That the observations of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as outlined above, be conveyed to the Executive.

- **Economic Development**

Report ED.35/13 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for the areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.131/13), decided:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges, as set out in the relevant Appendices to Report ED.35/13, with effect from 1 April 2014; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.”

- **Tourism and City Centre Management**

Although it was considered that there was little scope for increasing charges for other organisations across the country, a wider range of tickets together with other items such as fishing licences continued to be sold to try to maintain income. Following the refurbishment of the Old Town Hall the buying / sales strategy had been revised to stock a higher quality of merchandise with higher margins. Other opportunities were also being explored.

- **Assembly Rooms**

It was proposed that charges for use of the Assembly Rooms in 2014/15 be increased by 3.8%. Other opportunities to increase income were being explored as part of the internal refurbishment of the Tourist Information Centre.

- **Enterprise Centre**

Following the review of the Enterprise Centre management of the facility was undertaken from the Civic Centre, as a result of which any income received was solely

derived from the rental and service charge of the occupied units. It was proposed to increase the rent and the service charge for 2014/15 by 3.8% in line with inflation.

- **Planning Services**

The planning fees had been increased last year and no further increases were proposed at the moment.

- **Building Control**

Fees were now kept under regular review by the Building Control Service and were set in line with other Cumbrian authorities.

- **Summary of Income Generated**

The acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report, with the exception of Building Control which was self financing, would result in an anticipated level of income of £595,600 against the MTFP target of £595,600.

In considering the matter Members raised the following questions and comments:

- *Members were concerned about the proposed increase in charges at the Enterprise Centre.*

In response to a suggestion from a Member the Director of Economic Development advised that the charge for the use of the Assembly Rooms could be either £66 or £67 rather than the figure quoted in the report.

RESOLVED – That Report ED.35/13 be welcomed.

Capital Budget Report

(d) Revised Capital Programme 2013/14 and Provisional Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2018/19

The Director of Resources submitted report RD.56/13 detailing the revised Capital Programme for 2013/14, together with the proposed method of financing. The report summarised the proposed programme for 2014/15 to 2018/19 in the light of the new capital pressures identified, and summarised the estimated capital resources available to fund the programme.

The Executive had, on 18 November 2013 (EX.136/13), decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the revised capital programme and relevant financing for 2013/14 as set out in Appendices A and B of Report RD.56/13;
2. Recommended that the City Council approve re-profiling of £710,000 from 2013/14;
3. Had given initial consideration to the capital spending requests for 2014/15 to 2018/19 contained in Report RD.56/13 in the light of the estimated available resources;

4. Noted that any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by the Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved.”

Details of the following new capital spending proposals, which fell within the area of responsibility of the Panel, were provided:

- Vehicles and Plant
- Old Town Hall / Greenmarket
- Public Realm Work S106
- Castle Way S106
- Sheepmount Road
- Bitts Park Access
- Enterprise Centre / West Walls
- Revised Capital Programme

In considering the matter Members raised the following questions and comments:

- *What was the spending proposal in respect of the ICT service?*

The Director of Resources advised that the Council had an ICT strategy and the figures in that part of the report related to the replacement of equipment.

In response to a query from a Member the Director advised that the figure of £67,000 indicated within Appendix A of the report was related to the Cenotaph and other monuments.

- *The Cenotaph looked tidy and looked after not a mess as had been suggested.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that the Buildings and Facilities Manager had itemised the work required and the figure quoted was for work on all of the City's war memorials and would include landscaping.

- *City and County Councillors were putting money into their own wards and the effort made was acknowledged.*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder believed that the City and County Councils should work together but care had to be taken that work was not duplicated and that the work related to the residents of Carlisle.

RESOLVED – That Report RD.56/13 – Revised Capital Programme 2013/14 and Provisional Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2018/19 be noted.

(The meeting ended at 12:47pm)