
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
CORPORATE RESOURCES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2002**

CROS.122/02 AREA WORKING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW

Pursuant to Minute CROS 114/02, the Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy reported (TC.166/02) on the issue of Area-Based Working. He posed for Members four basic questions:-

What would an area-based structure do?

How would it operate?

What would it look like?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of area involvement for Carlisle?

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy also circulated a copy of the Terms of Reference for Joint Neighbourhood Forums between the Cumbria County Council and the Borough Council which are operated within the Copeland Area, together with supporting information on the way in which those Neighbourhood Forums had operated since their inception in April 2001.

Members commented on the way in which the County Council's Area Forums operated, and in particular the way in which there was a sharing of local knowledge in a friendly/co-operative atmosphere with representatives of various agencies including the Community Police, Headteachers etc. Members felt that those Forums represented an opportunity for grass-root representation and local views to be fed into the democratic process and also provided a Community Leader role for local Ward Councillors in giving them a Forum for gathering the views of the residents in their Wards. It could also provide a role for local Councillors to consider applications for grants for local organisations.

Members also commented on the way in which individual Area Forums were arranged and operated and recognised the fact that whilst there were parameters within which the Forums operated, the actual arrangements were a matter for individual Ward Members to make the arrangements to suit their own individual circumstances. Members did, however, highlight potential difficulties where there was mixed political representation in Wards.

Members further commented that they considered that the City Council could add value to the County Council's Area Forums but the City Council and City Councillors would need to approach the proposal with a view to securing a greater Member involvement in the City Council's decision-making and not as a means to utilise "back bench Councillors". Members did not consider that there should be a separate Forum for the

District and the County Council, as there would be value in the two Councils acting together. Members also noted the previous difficulties in establishing joint City/County Council decision-making groups and stressed that the City Council should be an equal partner within the Area Working and not a junior partner to the County Council.

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy informed Members that the Joint Arrangement between the County Council and Copeland Borough Council was funded by the County Council with Copeland Borough Council making a total contribution of approximately £35,000 which included a grant budget of approximately £10,000, a contribution of approximately £3,000 in respect of the administration charges etc and the secondment of one Officer to Area Working.

Ms Georgina Ternent commented on her previous role as Neighbour Development Officer in the Cumbria County Council working in the Allerdale area and in particular of her experiences in Area Working and her role in bringing various groups together to discuss common issues, together with the approach which had been taken to address significant issues etc.

RESOLVED - That the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee support in principle the proposals for Area Working in Carlisle by establishing joint arrangements with the County Council. That the Executive be informed that that would be the preferred option of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee subject to Officers investigating further the details involved in the joint working arrangements.

(2) That the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contribution which the Copeland Borough Council were making to Joint Working with the County Council in Copeland amounting to some £35,000 and the City Council's Executive be asked to note the possible budget implications arising from such Joint Working. It should however be noted that the above sum may not all be "new money" as it was possible that a number of functions and budgets might be delegated to the Area Committees and it might also be possible to second an existing member of staff.

(3) It be noted that the existing County Council Neighbourhood Forums within the City and the areas which they presently covered may not match exactly the City Council's Wards and consideration might be needed with regard to the groupings etc of Wards/Forums