

MEETING BETWEEN CITY COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE  
AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PARISH COUNCILS

MONDAY, 9 JUNE 2003 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: The Mayor (Mrs Pattinson)  
Councillor Mitchelson  
Councillor Firth  
Councillor Mrs Geddes  
Councillor Mrs Bowman (M)  
Councillor Knapton  
Councillor Bloxham

Mr D Rutherford, Vice Chair, Carlisle Parish Councils Association

Mr C Moth, Secretary, Carlisle Parish Councils Association

Mr B Earp, Parish Councils Association Executive

Ms P Dalton and Ms E Auld, Dalston Parish Council

Mr W Little and Ms E Reed, Orton Parish Council

Mr D Johnson, St Cuthbert's Without Parish Council

Mr D Cheeseborough, Ms G Kartach, Wetheral Parish Council

Mr K Hind, Ms C Ridley, Ms S Ritchie, Brampton Parish Council

Mr D Jackman and Ms J Thomas, Hayton Parish Council

Ms K Johnson and Mr N Budden, Arthuret Parish Council

Mr J T Simpson and Mr A Watts, Farlam Parish Council

Ms B C Watson and Mr C Nicholson, Stanwix Rural Parish Council

Mr M Gardner, Burtholme Parish Council

Ms M E McKenna and Mr J Roe, Beaumont Parish Council

Mr J Porter and Ms A Jefferson, Westlinton Parish Council

Ms S Forster and Mr D Hewat, Scaleby Parish Council

Mr B Hogg, Walton Parish Council

Mr G Richardson, Cumbria Association of Local Councils

Ms K Baildon, Audit Commission (CPA Team)

Carlisle City Council:

Mr P Stybelski, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Ms K Hook, Mr C Hardman, Ms C Rankin, Mr D Beaty,

Mr J Nutley, Ms C Elliot, Mr M Beveridge, Ms C Taylor,

Mr J Gooding, Ms M Mooney, Mr A Eales, Mr J Egan,

Mr D Steele, Mr D Williams, Mr M Battersby, Mr R Speirs,

Mr I Dixon

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms McManus and Ms J Holland.

## 2. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed Parish Council Representatives to the meeting and was pleased to see a large number of Parish Councils represented. She added that the City Council and the Parish Councils had worked together for many years and was looking forward to another successful year.

## 3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2002 between the City Council and Parish Council Representatives (a copy of which had been circulated) were received.

There were no matters arising.

## 4. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

Mr C Hardman reported on the process followed by the City Council in reviewing the Local Plan. He informed the meeting that an Issues Paper which posed questions on a number of topics had been circulated to a large number of organisations including each Parish Council in the City Council's area. He added that whilst the current Local Plan ran up to 2006, the Review was a 3-year programme and many elements of the Review were statutory processes including consultation. He added that whilst the closing date for the consultation on the Issues Paper had been 30 May 2003, comments were still being received and further comments from Parish Councils would be welcomed. He added that so far there had been seven responses from Parish Councils. The issues which had so far been raised in the Review concerned, amongst other things, the diversification of the rural economy, the issue of affordable housing, the concentration of housing and employment development around the larger centres of Dalston, Longtown and Brampton, the need to protect the style of villages by extension of design policies and the use of barns.

Mr Hardman added that whilst some Parishes had replied on matters relating to broad issues, other Parishes had given detailed answers to the questions raised. He added that it was a matter for Parishes to respond in the way they felt best and Officers would work around those responses. He added that if Parishes needed more time to respond on the Issues Paper they should contact the Planning Unit. He also offered to attend Parish meetings or speak to individual Parishes. He added that the Issues Paper represented the starting point in the Local Plan Review and following consideration of the responses to that Paper, the further detailed policies would be worked up with a further draft produced towards the end of the year. Further work would be undertaken by the City Council in consultation with Parish Councils to work up detailed policies.

In response to a question received, Mr Hardman gave a definition for Brownfield sites included in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 to the effect that a Brownfield site was land which had been developed and which was to be re-used although this excluded agricultural land and buildings. He added that the Council needed to work towards a national target for Brownfield sites and that the County Council, in their Structure Plan, had also set targets for those sites. He added that consultation on the County Council's Draft Structure Plan was to be considered by the next meeting of the City Council's Executive.

In response to a further question, Mr Hardman commented that there was reference in the County Structure Plan to sources of renewable energy and suggested that the City Council's policy to guide development on sources of renewable energy would build on the information and guidance contained in the County Structure Plan.

## 5. HOUSING RENEWAL

Mr C Moth reported that the item had been submitted by the Parish Councils Association in order to receive an update on the latest situation with regard to responses on the allocation of grants for Housing Renewal.

Councillor Bloxham commented that the Executive, at its meeting held on 9 June 2003, had considered a report on the issue which had been referred onto the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Council's position on the issue of Housing Renewal Grants would be clearer once those comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been given further consideration by the Executive.

Mr Speirs added that there had been a mixed response with regard to the issue of targeting area grants and comments from the Parish Councils on the delivery of grants would be very welcome.

## 6. RURAL STRATEGY AND RURAL OFFICE

In response to a query raised by the Parish Councils Association, Mr Beaty reported that a Rural Strategy was in the process of being produced and it was anticipated that it would be circulated by the end of June. He commented that the Strategy reflected the contents of the White Paper, the elements of the City Vision which referred to rural areas, and set out a framework for the Council Strategy in Rural Areas. He added that attached to the Strategy was a series of Action Plans which related to the activities of the various agencies who were active in the rural areas and gave an overview of current activity within the rural area. He commented on the relationship with the Rural Regeneration Company who would be a key player in taking the various initiatives forward.

He added that work was also being carried out on a proposal to establish a Rural Office in the Civic Centre which would provide a base for a range of

rural area support organisations, particular Officers from the City Council, Voluntary Action Cumbria and a Hot Desk facility for visiting officers from the Longtown Regeneration Office, the County Council Neighbourhood teams and Highways Office and Members of the Parish Councils Association. Ms Rankin added that the intention was to establish an office in the Civic Centre which would provide greater co-ordination and joint working between the various agencies working in the Rural Areas to try and ensure that the best possible service to the rural communities was delivered.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

## 7. FOOTPATHS

At the request of the Parish Councils Association, Mr Battersby reported that the City Council either directly, or by exercising its claimed rights, carried out the maintenance of all footpaths within the Carlisle area. He added that the East Cumbria Countryside Project had been requested to carry out that work on behalf of the City Council. Mr Battersby further added that the East Cumbria Countryside Project had been requested to carry out some work on a hierarchy of maintenance work and once that document had been received, he would circulate it to the Parish Councils for their views.

In response to a question, Mr Battersby advised Parish Council Representatives that any problems with footpaths should be reported directly to the City Council on the contact number (01228 625016).

## 8. CPA UPDATE

Ms Hook gave an update on the Council's preparations for Comprehensive Performance Assessment. She informed the meeting that CPA was a new inspection regime borne out of Best Value and was similar to the Ofsted inspections which were carried out for schools. She said that there was benefits for those Councils which performed well and penalties for those which did not. She added that the District Councils in Cumbria were amongst the first tranche of reviews for District Councils and Carlisle's inspection was to take place next week. She added that CPA Inspectors would gather views about the City Council's performance from partners which would include Parish Councils. She further added that the Lead Inspector for the CPA team Karen Baildon was in attendance at the meeting and any Parish Councils who wished to speak to the Inspectors during their visit could make arrangements via Karen Hook.

Karen Baildon noted that a questionnaire had been sent to Parish Councils and partner organisations which had given only a short time for a reply but added that any comments which the Parishes wished to make on the City Council's performance would be most welcome.

In response to questions from Parish Council representatives with regard to the distribution of the CPA questionnaires to Parish Councils Karen Baildon agreed that the deadline of 4 June for responses could be ignored and invited



Parishes to either arrange a visit or to phone the CPA Inspectors to submit their views.

In response to further questions with regard to Regional Government and the future of District and County Councils the Town Clerk and Chief Executive commented that an announcement on Regional Government was expected in June/July. He added that the timetable for any implementation of Regional Government would run for some time. The Action Plans which would arise from the CPA assessment would be focused on improving services and would therefore result in improvements for citizens. Those improvements in services would be apparent before any changes arising from the Regional Government timetable.

## 9. DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Ms C Taylor informed the meeting of a Best Value Review of Democratic Engagement which was currently being carried out by the City Council. She commented that the Review would examine how the Council engaged with the general public and would focus on engagement via official meetings, consultation, interaction, engaging young people, other hard to reach groups and improving voter turnout.

She reported that a number of key questions had been drawn up to stimulate the debate which related to the types of meetings the City Council arranged, the use of the website, why people vote etc. She added that an Officer Group had been established to lead the Review and that Group was being directed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. She added however that the Review would be particularly relevant to locally elected representatives of both the City Councils and Parish Councils and it would be helpful for comments from City and Parish Councillors to be fed into the Review process. She commented on the arrangements which were being made to gather the views of City Councillors and she sought the views of the Parish Councils on how best they could be involved. She suggested that a copy of the Scoping report could be circulated to all Parish Clerks and each individual Parish Clerk could seek the views of their Parish Council as to their preferred method of response either as individuals, as a Parish or by Officers of the Council addressing a Parish Council meeting.

As part of the debate it was agreed that Arthuret Parish Council should be congratulated for the work which they had carried out in relation to democratic involvement and in particular the establishment of a Youth Parish Council, an idea which could be commended to all Parish Councils in the City Council's area.

## 10. AREA WORKING

The Leader of the City Council informed the meeting that the Council was presently investigating the issue of area working. He noted that whilst there were Parishes established in the rural area the urban area of the City was not parished. He further added that the County Council had established a system

of Neighbourhood Forums and it was not the City Council's intention to duplicate provision which already existed. He added that further discussions were proposed between the City Council and the County Council on this matter however prior to those discussions the City Council would appreciate the views of the Parish Councils Association.

Mr Moth informed the meeting that the next meeting of the Parish Councils Association was due to take place on 30 September although the Executive would meet prior to that. It was agreed that the views of the Parish Council should be submitted before the proposed meeting of the Executive and prior to the City Council's meeting with the County Council.

Mr Moth further added that the Parish Councils were sensitive to the parishing of urban areas which was a stated aim and policy of the Parish Councils Association. He further added that the Parish Councils would wish to see details of the City Council's proposals with regard to area working.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that as discussions progressed on the matter it would be useful for the City Council to meet the Parish Councils Executive or representatives of the Parish Councils to discuss the proposals further.

The Secretary of the Parish Council's Association agreed that the Parish Council's Executive would respond quickly to the issue of area working in Carlisle and would seek the wider views of Parish Councils as the matter progressed.

## 11. CODE OF CONDUCT

Mr Egan reminded the meeting of the need to return within the required timescales the various forms required by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct following the recent elections. He highlighted instances where forms were outstanding from Parish Councils. He further added that there were three Parishes where there had been a delay in submitting forms for the May elections. Whilst the elections in those Parishes were scheduled to be held on 19 June, as they were uncontested the Members had been returned. The forms would however still be required and the timescales would commence from 19 June. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services further added that any Parishes who co-opted Members on to fill vacancies should return the forms within the required timescales and those timescales would commence as from the date of co-option.

## 12. PRECEPT DATES

Mr Steele commented that the City Council's budget timetable for the financial year 2004/05 was expected to be similar to the timetable operated in 2003/04 and in order to meet the timetable he requested that Parish Councils notify the City Council of precepts not later than 4 December 2003. He added that he would write to Parish Councils in due course to request their precept information but suggested that the Parish meeting to set the precept would

need to be held by the end of November 2003 in order to comply with the above deadline.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

### 13. CITY COUNCIL'S STAFF

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive circulated to Parish Council Clerks a series of organisational charts which set out details with regard to Local City Councillors, the Wards they represented and their contact telephone numbers, the Council and in particular the Members of the Executive and their respective portfolio areas together with details of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive also circulated a chart showing the Officer structure of the City Council following the recent re-organisation with details of the Executive Directors, the Heads of Business Units and the various functions which their Units covered. The Executive Directors and the Heads of Business Units who were in attendance were introduced to the meeting.

### 14. OPEN QUESTIONS

In response to a question relating to information on location of Units within the Civic Centre the Town Clerk and Chief Executive commented that work was presently being carried out to consolidate the Units created as part of the Organisational Review in accommodation in the Civic Centre and Bousteads Grassing and he commented on the work which was being carried out to ensure that Business Units were located in the best location for the delivery of services. He added that as part of those moves it was proposed to create a Customer Contact Centre which would provide customers with a One Stop Shop once they arrive in the Civic Centre as Officers would be called to meet the customer on the ground floor as opposed to the customer finding their way to the appropriate Officer.

He added that whilst there would be substantial changes behind the scenes efforts would be made to keep the same telephone numbers and the Customer Services Team would keep people informed of the changes as they happen. The Customer Services Team would also circulate information to all Parish Council Clerks about Officers including their direct line numbers.

### 15. MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services commented on new information which had been received with regards to the ability for Parish Councils to determine whether to pay allowances to the Chairs of Parish Councils etc and the process for setting up Parish Councils Independent Remuneration Panels to determine those allowances.

Guy Richardson commented that the Cumbria Association of Parish Councils had also received information and they were in the process of circulating information to Parish Clerks on the implications of the changes to the

Members Allowances Scheme and proposals for establishing Independent Remuneration Panels. He commented that as Parish Councils were not yet up to speed on the matter that it would be useful for the Member Support and Employee Services Unit to liaise with the Cumbria Association of Local Councils on the information to be distributed.

#### 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting should be 1 December 2003 although this date was subject to confirmation.

The Mayor thanked all present for their attendance and their input and invited those present to join her for hospitality.

(The meeting ended at 8.35 pm)