

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER 2002 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Rutherford (Chairman), Councillors Crookdake, Dodd, Glover, B Hodgson, Mrs Mallinson, Ms Martlew and

Mrs Parsons.

ALSO PRESENT – Councillors S Fisher and McDevitt attended the afternoon session and participated in the proceedings.

Councillor Firth attended the afternoon session as an observer.

IOS.99/02 APOLOGIES

An apology for late arrival at the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Dodd. Councillor Dodd arrived at the meeting at 10.10 am. Councillor Parsons gave her apologies for the afternoon session of the meeting and Councillor Crookdake as she would have to leave the afternoon session early.

IOS.100/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING**DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP)**

Councillor E Mallinson declared a personal interest in accordance with the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members in respect of any items relating to Cumbria County Council, in particular Waste Management, as she was a Member of the County Council.

IOS.101/02 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2002 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman. The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2002 were noted as a correct record of the meeting.

IOS.102/02 CALL-INS

There were no matters which had been subject to call-in.

IOS.103/02 MONITORING OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer presented Report TC.235/02 highlighting the Forward Plan (1 December 2002 – 31 March 2003) issues which fell within the ambit of this Committee. With regard to KD.093/02 – Local Plan Review, he advised that there would be an opportunity for this Committee to submit its comments on the consultation before it ended in March 2003.

In relation to KD.071/02 and KD.070/02 - Review of Conservation Areas, reports in these matters would be brought to the Committee before submission to the Executive in March 2003.

The Chairman advised that she had recently attended a Seminar looking at the Councillors' experiences of Overview and Scrutiny in various Councils. One authority had adopted a system whereby a Scrutiny Meeting was held exactly one week before the Executive Meeting. Therefore, there was an opportunity to provide input to any reports to be considered by the Executive. She advised that this and other issues could be discussed at the workshop for Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs to be held in January 2003. She asked Members to inform her, or the Vice Chairman, of any issues which they would like to raise at this workshop meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Forward Plan (1 December to 31 March 2003) issues which fell within the ambit of this Committee be noted.

(2) That Members inform the Chairman or Vice Chairman of this Committee of any issues that they would like to have raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Workshop to be held in January 2003.

IOS.104/02 WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer presented an Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2002/03, which took into account matters scheduled to be dealt with by this Committee.

In relation to Streetworks he advised that it was not yet clear whether or not Mr David Sheard, or his representative, would be attending the meeting on 23 January 2003. He was hoping for clarification today when Mr Sheard was due to attend the afternoon part of the meeting.

A Member asked if the subject review of Abandoned Vehicles, which had been a reserve topic, would be tackled in the current year. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that it was unlikely that it would come forward during this year, but it could be carried forward to next year either as a definite subject review or again, as a reserve topic. Members discussed the issue of Abandoned Vehicles, in particular the powers of local authorities and the Police to remove such vehicles. They suggested that it could be held as a reserve topic and if it became a bigger issue at any stage, it could be brought in as a subject to be reviewed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer undertook to get an update from the Head of Environmental Protection Services when subject reviews were being considered and a decision could be made at that time as to the status of the Review.

A Member asked the Support Officer to re-examine the format of the Work Programme document, in particular whether previous meetings needed to be shown.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Work Programme be noted.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer when outlining potential subject reviews for 2003/04, contact the Head of Environmental Protection Services and make a recommendation on whether it should be a full review or a reserve topic.

IOS.105/02 EXECUTIVE RESPONSES

(a) Rural Action Zone – Rural Regeneration Company

RESOLVED – That the Executive's response in relation to the Committee's comments on the Rural Action Zone – Rural Regeneration Company be noted.

(b) Performance Indicators – Total Waste Collected

The Executive's response supporting the recommendations of this Committee (EX.374/02) had been circulated and was welcomed by the Committee. A Member raised a concern about the new Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment Directive on White Goods which put an onus on manufacturers to recycle. She commented on the implications for the Local Authority in the time leading up to the Directive coming into place. She suggested that the Committee should flag this issue up to the Executive as there may be implications for the Council.

The Head of Environmental Protection Services advised that it was a complex piece of legislation and that a lot of guidance would have to be provided between now and when the Directive comes into effect. He advised that as this guidance became available, the implications would be clearer and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive would be kept informed as necessary.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Executive's response be noted.

(2) That the Head of Environmental and Protection Services monitor the legislation and guidance in relation to the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment Directive, and report to Overview and Scrutiny and Executive as necessary.

IOS.106/02 BUDGET ISSUES – GENERAL FUND REVENUE

ESTIMATES

The Executive had considered a report (Financial Memo 02/03 No 77) on the General Fund Revenue Estimates for 2003/04. This Committee had received the report as part of the budgetary cycle.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that there had been discussions on the manner by which Overview and Scrutiny could best continue its role as regards scrutiny of the budget.

The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the matter and had agreed in future it did not require to see budget estimates. Members commented that it would be useful in future years to examine and question the relevant Portfolio Holders' budget proposals.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that consideration of budget would be another matter which would be discussed at the Chairs and Vice Chairs Workshop in January 2003.

RESOLVED – (1) That the General Fund Revenue Estimates for 2003/04 in respect of the Council's General Fund Services be noted.

(2) That in future such Revenue Estimate Reports should not be submitted to this Committee, but that an alternative way of scrutinising the budget should be developed.

IOS.107/02 BEST VALUE REVIEW – WASTE MANAGEMENT AND

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES ACTION PLAN

The Head of Environmental Protection Services submitted Report EPS.01/02 reviewing the outcome of the second year of the Best Value Review Action Plan. He provided details of progress with the following actions contained within Year 2 of the Improvement Programme Plan :

(a) Monitor effectiveness of dry recyclables collection.

The Green Box Pilot Scheme involving 15,000 households had been evaluated and seen as effective. The Pilot Scheme had been funded through the Landfill Tax and the continuation of the Scheme in the pilot areas would have budgetary implications for the Council. These implications would be

reported under the next Agenda Item. Overall the scheme had recycled between 12% and 15% of household waste, and in response to a Member's question about the impact if this was rolled out to the whole Council area, the Officer suggested that it could result in achievement of over 12% of household being recycled.

(b) Develop Composting Partnership to establish a Pilot Kerbside Garden

Waste Collection Service

Again, this had been introduced in the pilot areas, although not all 15,000 households had received garden waste containers as they did not all have gardens. Initial results from the pilot were encouraging, although it was still an early stage as it had only commenced in September. The implications for continuation of this pilot would be addressed under the next item on the Agenda.

(c) Continue revision of street cleaning frequencies to ensure high priority given to more selected areas.

This action was still ongoing. New Government practices and standards stated that streets should only be cleaned when they really need it, and a set of standards should be followed. The street cleaning system had gradually been moved from one where all streets were cleaned on a cyclical basis to a more responsive service where standards were monitored and cleaning undertaken in response.

Members commented on specific areas where there seemed to be a lack of street cleaning. The Head of Environmental Protection Services responded that the Council does comply with the Code of Practice in relation to street cleaning, and that areas which experience more severe litter problems are targeted, but that all areas are monitored to check their compliance with the standards set out in the Code of Practice. He advised that there would be cost implication of increasing the amount of monitoring and/or cleaning.

In response to a question about fast food outlets, he advised that legislation was in place to force fast food operators to clean up within 250 metres of their premises.

(d) Produce proposals for the integration of litter removal and weed spraying work into one Contract area.

This had arisen as some areas had fallen between street cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts. The problems which had been experienced had been overcome to some extent and there had been improvements for example, Grounds Maintenance staff often litter pick areas before grass is cut.

In relation to weed spraying, the only spraying undertaken by the City Council is within the old Carlisle Borough area, all other areas are the responsibility of Cumbria County Council through Capita.

(e) Develop proposals for the replacement of Court Square conveniences preferably through partnership.

There had been a delay with negotiations, but the Officer hoped that within the next 12 months the matter would be progressed. Members expressed some concern at the delay and welcomed any efforts to get this situation resolved.

(f) Plan and undertake the adaptation of either Upperby Park or Dalston toilets to enable use by

disabled users.

The Dalston toilets had now been modified and plans had been finalised for the modification of the toilets in Upperby Park.

The Head of Environmental Protection Services then went on to outline progress with the recommendations which were contained in the Best Value Inspection, and highlighted the following specific areas:

(i) Improvement of Customer Services through the development and publishing of a set of performance standards and improvements in communication about services and recycling facilities - this was being addressed through use of the website and Carlisle Focus.

(ii) To achieve more effective waste minimisation activity - this had been raised with the Best Value Inspectors as responsibility for waste minimisation falls on Cumbria County Council, although the City Council does take every opportunity available to get the message across.

(iii) To achieve integration of Service Areas - this was being addressed by softening the Client/Contractor split. In addition, Dog Fouling Officers were undertaking education in littering as well as dog fouling and attempts had been made to liaise with schools Playing Fields Managers about litter in their areas.

In response to Member's questions, the Officer commented on the work which was being undertaken by the Dog Fouling Enforcement Officers in the education, particularly of school age children, of problems caused by littering as well as dog fouling. A Member suggested that the next edition of Carlisle Focus, which was due to be published in Spring 2003, could have special features on waste management, marketing existing recycling services, reporting on the success of pilot projects and educating the public on waste minimisation.

RESOLVED – (1) That Year 3 of the Waste Management and Public Conveniences Best Value Review Action Plan be approved.

(2) That the Head of Environmental Protection Services use the next issue of Carlisle Focus to promote and educate the public on waste minimisation.

IOS.108/02 OPTIONS FOR WASTE POLICY

The Head of Environmental Protection Services reported verbally on the dry recyclables ie Green Box collection and the pilot Kerbside Garden Waste Collection Service. The Green Box Pilot Scheme had been funded through the landfill tax until March 2003 and the Garden Waste Collection Service had been funded until September 2003.

A bid to the Government for funding for a continuation of these Pilot Schemes had been unsuccessful and therefore to continue them in the current areas, without any expansion to the rest of the City Council area, would have cost implications for the Council. There would be a revenue cost of £90,000 and a capital cost £150,000. This would cover the continuation of collection until the end of March 2004, the capital item covering the wheelie bins which were supplied on a sale or return basis. These costs had been built into the budget process in anticipation that no Government funding would be provided and would be considered by the Executive as part of the budgetary process. A report to the Executive on 19 December would be necessary as the partners in the schemes, Eden District Council were considering re-tendering the Green Box Contract. A decision on this matter would be taken by Eden's Executive on 9 January 2003 and therefore a further report would be made to the Executive on 6 February 2003 to enable them to consider future direction in light of Eden's decision. This Committee would be kept informed by means of a verbal progress report at the

January 2003 meeting.

The pilot schemes had been successful to date and there would not be a justification to discontinue them on the basis of success so far. Initial results from Green Box and the Garden Waste Collection pilots indicated that the Government targets for recycling could be achieved if the pilot scheme was rolled out across Carlisle. The Pilot Schemes had provided a great deal of information on the best ways of collecting recyclable materials. Various changes had been made throughout the Pilot Scheme e.g. stopping the of collections of plastics and cardboards and the effectiveness of these decisions had been monitored.

In response to Members' questions the Head of Environmental Protection Services outlined the difficulties in recycling plastic materials and the physical difficulties of collecting cardboard.

Members suggested that in relation to the Garden Waste Collection Service, there could be examination of whether this could just be run over the summer and early autumn months. The officer responded that the Pilot Schemes were being used to assess peak times and that the results of the Pilots would be used to undertake an overall examination into collection not only of recyclable materials but also of regular waste collection.

If budgetary provision was made for the continuation of the Pilot Schemes for 2003/04, detailed consideration would be given to future waste collection methods, recycling services and partnership approaches, based on results of the Pilot Schemes.

Members welcomed the Pilot Schemes and the initial results and commented that residents in a number of areas were asking that services be provided in their areas.

RESOLVED – (1) That the progress with the Waste Policy be noted.

(2) That the Head of Environmental Protection Services provide a verbal report to the Committee meeting on 23 January 2003 updating Members on progress.

(3) That Members thank the Head of Environmental Protection Services for a very informative and enlightening meeting.

(The meeting adjourned at 12.45 for lunch and resumed at 1.30pm)

IOS.109/02 SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee was joined by the Officer Team for this Best Value Review and Ms L Sneap, Carlisle Council for Voluntary Service, Inspector Denwood, Cumbria Police, Ms G Kennedy, Business Link Cumbria and K Dobson, Impact Housing Association for this item.

Mr D Sheard, Area Support Officer, Cumbria County Council, was present at the start of the meeting but indicated that he had another urgent meeting to attend and left. He indicated that he would liaise with Officers over ways in which the County Council could become involved in this Review.

Professor F Peck, Ms F Bell and Ms V Goodwin from the Centre for Regional Economic Development – Carlisle Campus also attended the meeting in relation to work they had carried out on the regeneration needs analysis.

The Performance Manager indicated that the purpose of this item was to deal with the re-scoping of the Supporting Communities (formerly Regeneration) Best Value Review. The meeting would be requested to consider a number of key questions, i.e. –

- Why does the Council spend in this area?
- What does the Council want to achieve with the money?
- What changes have occurred?
- What remains to be done?
- How can the gap be closed and are there barriers to progress?

She considered that, at the outset of the Review, the experience gained in regeneration issues in the Carlisle South area could be explored to learn from the successes and identify any areas where working could be improved.

The Head of Economic and Community Development submitted a report and set the Review in the context of national policy and strategy. The Government has recently reviewed the impact of area based initiatives and it is timely to examine what is being achieved in Carlisle. She also pointed to new opportunities arising through Carlisle Housing Association, potential NWDA funding and the stated priorities of the Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership. The Review could focus on area renewal by analysing how it is delivered in Carlisle South. Best practice and proposed improvements to the service could then be rolled out across the District.

Professor Peck, Ms Goodwin and Ms Bell from the Centre for Regional Economic Development – Carlisle Campus then gave a presentation to the meeting on their final report commissioned by the City Council on a Regeneration Needs Analysis. A series of tables were submitted which highlighted various indicators of deprivation etc on a Ward by Ward basis. However, the Ward boundaries used were those in use prior to the 1999 review.

The Chairman then invited comments from Members when the following main points emerged:-

- (a) Flexible broad principles should be established with Carlisle South being used as a tool to work out best practice to apply to the Review and to avoid bad practice of the past.
- (b) Past experience of the way in which funding had been used in Raffles and Botcherby should be learnt from.
- (c) Problems with getting people to indicate their aspirations for their area would need to be addressed.
- (d) There should also be a rural input looking at regeneration being undertaken in Longtown through the mini-Sure Start and Market Towns initiatives.
- (e) The Review Team should look at how the City Council interacts with other Agencies, drawing on the experience with Carlisle South to use as a model.
- (f) Data on take up of benefits and ways of encouraging people to take up their benefit entitlements would be useful.

(g) Data provided by the Centre for Regional Economic Development could be superimposed on a map of Carlisle to give a picture of where the most multiple deprived Wards are.

(h) There was an issue relating to the way information was collected. Not all data was collected on a Ward by Ward basis. For example, information was often collated into specific groups, eg young people, the elderly. It was understood that data from the 2001 Census would be made available on other than a Ward by Ward basis. Statistical information held by other Agencies may be useful to obtain to contribute to the Review.

(i) Data collected on a Ward basis often did not give a true picture as specific problems may affect parts of a Ward. The ability to look at a microcosm of deprivation within a particular Ward should be explored.

Councillor Mrs E Mallinson then left the meeting and submitted her apologies for the remainder of the meeting.

The meeting then split into three workshops to discuss issues relating to the specific key questions aimed at providing information from which the Review could be re-scoped. Feedback from the workshops was then reported, the main points being as follows:-

Why does the Council spend in this area?

To improve the quality of life for people, including physical improvements to the environment.

Spending was, however, often general and not focussed.

There was often a culture of "it's always been done that way."

Spending on regeneration should look to empower communities.

The Council spends in this area as no-one else will do it.

There should be clear objectives acting as a focus for regeneration activity.

What does the Council want to achieve with the money?

To give residents a choice and a voice.

Aims should be very clear.

Neighbourhood renewal/regeneration had not been a specific aim of the Council to date.

Money spent in the past in Raffles and Botcherby had been for specific projects aimed at making physical improvements.

There was a spin off to other areas of policy, such as area working and how the Council works with other partners.

What has been achieved so far in regeneration?

There were a number of agencies involved in regeneration in the Carlisle area, eg the Sure Start initiative, Health Action Zone, Market Towns Initiative, Vital Villages initiatives, the Employment Alternatives scheme.

Community Safety contributed through safer communities, CCTV monitoring, safe shopping initiatives and drugs awareness campaigns.

Cumbria in Bloom contributed to the enhancement of the physical environment.

Other environmental enhancements were carried out in some parts of the City.

What are the gaps in regeneration?

Limited resources.

Low business start up rates.

Low achievement in education with truancy and exclusion from school a problem.

Tackling crime.

Tackling the causes of poor health.

Overcoming stigma for certain estates/areas.

Assisting vulnerable people.

Raising people's aspirations and skill levels.

Accessibility to services and ensuring good transport links.

Access to recreational facilities.

What are the barriers to progress?

Tackling the causes of crime.

Working with parents.

Establishing clear relationships between agencies.

Promoting citizenship.

Devolving Budgets to areas would help to target funding to regeneration in priority areas.

Community ownership and involvement.

Better communications.

Improving environmental quality in areas.

Changing the culture of low aspiration.

What are the priority issues for action?

Partnerships should be meaningful and long term.

Avoid merely paying lip service to regeneration.

A quick fire approach is not the best way to tackle regeneration issues.

Whilst there were needy areas, there were also needy groups, eg the elderly, the young and teenagers.

Plans and funding should be for the long term.

People should be encouraged to identify what they think of their own "environment."

There should be flexibility to react to people's changing priorities.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Economic and Community Development be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee with options for the re-scoping of the Supporting Communities Best Value Review having regard to the outcome of the deliberations at this meeting.

(The meeting ended at 3.45pm)