

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 11 JULY 2013 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Luckley (Chairman) Councillors Mrs Bradley, Ellis, Mrs Prest, Scarborough, Miss Sherriff, Mrs Stevenson and Mrs Vasey

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Glover, Deputy Leader and Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder
Councillor Ms Quilter, Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Martlew, Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Riddle, Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Allison, Observer
Councillor Bloxham, Observer
Councillor Craig, Observer
Councillor J Mallinson, Observer
Councillor Watson, Observer
Councillor Whalen, Observer
Councillor Wilson, Observer

Mr Champion, Consultant (Arts Centre)
Mr Eady, Knight, Kavanagh and Page
Mr Irving, Riverside Carlisle
Mr Taylor, Riverside Carlisle

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Community Engagement
Director of Resources
Communities, Housing and Health Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

COSP.44/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

COSP.45/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Luckley declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.4 – Riverside Carlisle. The interest related to the fact that she was a City Council representative on the Riverside Carlisle Board.

Councillor Ms Quilter declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.4 – Riverside Carlisle. The interest related to the fact that she was employed by Riverside Carlisle.

COSP.46/13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 30 May 2013 be agreed as a correct record of the meetings and signed by the Chairman.

COSP.47/13 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

The Chairman of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel reported that Executive Decision EX.69/13 from the Executive on 1 July 2013 concerning Arts Centre Development had been called-in by Councillors Ellis, Mrs Prest and Mrs Vasey.

The Executive had decided:

That the Executive:

1. Approved the Warwick Street Fire Station for development as an Arts Centre for Carlisle
2. Approved the increase in the capital programme from £586,000 to £1,064,500 for recommendation to Council, noting that the increase will be funded from additional capital receipts generated from the Asset Review Programme.
3. Approved the release of the current budget and re-profiling of the overall scheme, subject to Council approval above, with £50,000 being incorporated within the 2013/14 Capital Programme and £1,014,500 in the 2014/15 Capital Programme.
4. Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People in consultation with the Director of Community Engagement to produce and progress the plans to deliver the Arts Centre as detailed in report CD.37/13.
5. Make report CD.37/13 available for consideration by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The reason for the decision by the Executive was that Carlisle had a recognised weakness in “mid-scale” arts and entertainments programmes and, in line with the aim of the Carlisle Plan, now sought to develop a sustainable facility which would act as a focal point for creative arts complementing and supporting the existing offer in and around the City. That was in line with the vision and actions in the Carlisle Plan.

The reason given by the Members for the call-in was “Concerns over doubling of capital costs”.

The call-in Members explained that they were concerned that the increase in the capital programme was the only part of the Executive’s decision that was to be referred to Council. The Members believed that the proposed costs for the project had already doubled and from experience believed that costs would rise higher than the estimate provided. The report stated that the Council were committed to the project but gave no indication of who would run the centre, how it would be funded or who would use it. The call-in Members acknowledged that those issues would be addressed but they were of the opinion that the decision had been made before costs were known.

The Member advised that some Members had received a briefing from the Director of Community Engagement on the revenue implications for the Council but the Director had not been able to provide a full answer at that time.

It had also been decided by the Executive to delegate authority to the Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder to produce and progress plans to deliver the Arts Centre.

Call-in Members believed that the report suggested that scrutiny would have no role in the project as the decisions had been made. Discussions about revenue and potential users

had not been scrutinised by Councillors and if the decision had not been called in the decision would have become live.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder advised that the report was the first step of a long process. The Arts Centre would tie in with the Carlisle Local Plan to make Carlisle a prosperous City and help to achieve a sports and arts showcase. The paper had taken over a year to produce and a range of venues had been explored. The Council had been investigating an arts centre since 2006 when a report was submitted to the Executive following a review by Roger Lancaster Associates.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder stated that the report recently submitted to the Executive was the first step to ensure the capital costs and that additional money could be put into the budget. The figures provided were outline figures. The Executive wished to ensure that an arts centre would attract residents and tourists both now and in the future. The Portfolio Holder believed that Officers had looked at the building to ensure it was fit for purpose, there had been consultation with local residents who had provided positive feedback and there would be further reports in the future in respect of revenue, the business case and who would run the centre.

The report outlined the aims and ambitions of what the Executive wished to deliver.

A Member reminded Members that the City Council owned the fire station building so there would be no outlay to purchase the building.

A Member believed that the decision had been made and that there would be no further scrutiny on that decision. There was no business plan for the development and there was no indication of revenue costs. The report suggested that the project could be funded from the Asset Review Programme. However, the Member believed that the programme was to sell low return assets and invest the funds in high return assets. There was also no risk assessment included in the report.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the report indicated that the Executive were looking at the fire station as a possible venue. The Member pointed out that the decision stated that the Executive "Approved the Warwick Street Fire Station for development as an Arts Centre for Carlisle". The Portfolio Holder advised that the programme was at an early stage and if the figures did not stack up further along the process the Executive would come back with other proposals. However, the Executive wanted an arts centre and there was more than enough evidence of the need for an arts centre.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Executive had been careful with the Council's budget over the past year and while they were aware that there were people in the City who were suffering they wished to ensure the Council achieved a good return on their money and created income streams.

A Member believed that the Council had adopted the PRINCE 2 method of project management. The report indicated that that process was not being followed. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that in the past PRINCE 2 had been used but there was currently a Corporate Project Board that managed projects alongside training in Microsoft Project for Officers. The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the remit of the group and advised that the group would report on the project to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

A Member queried whether revenues had been investigated. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the report did not go into the finer detail but that he would expect the project group would look at those issues. The group was set up with the Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder and looked at access and value for money to ensure that the project could be delivered alongside everything else.

A Member was reassured by the comments and whilst she was not against the proposal she believed there was insufficient information in the report for the Executive to make an informed decision.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder believed that the scheme would give a better return on Council funds than present interest rates. She had been to a meeting that morning regarding the Sense of Place and advised that the people who attended were positive about the vision and development in Carlisle and believed that Carlisle should be a destination and not a gateway to somewhere else. The Portfolio Holder believed that Carlisle was out on a limb by not having an arts centre. Residents in the Rickergate area had been concerned about the future of the area but the present proposal had allayed those fears. The Portfolio Holder also believed that the proposal would provide an iconic building of which the people of Carlisle would be proud. She explained that the capital costs had increased following the submission of the architect's concept.

A Member stated that he was not against a new theatre and believed that the main reason for the failure of the Lonsdale project was that the building had been allowed to deteriorate to its present condition. The proposed arts centre would be in a residential area with a lot of people around and therefore he did not believe it was the right building.

The Deputy Leader advised that there had been a lot of work undertaken on the project and at the beginning costs were investigated. He highlighted a number of smaller theatres across the country which were very successful. The report had been submitted to the Panel for their involvement.

A Member stated that the information had not been available to all Members until the Executive report was published while others had been given a presentation prior to the Executive meeting. He confirmed that the decision had been called in as members were unclear from the report how the arts centre would be funded and by whom and how it would be run.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder outlined the revenue funding as set out within the report. She believed that the arts centre would complement what was already in place and Officers had looked at similar projects in other areas.

The Director of Resources advised, in response to a query from a Member, that the financial figures in the report were a best estimate and were indicative of costs the Local Authorities incurred when running an arts centre. The figures were based on the arts centre being in the Methodist Hall and the Director advised that it was likely that the costs would change. Officers were looking to see what grants were available and a further report would be submitted at a future meeting.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged Members' concerns regarding costs but reiterated that the project was in its early stages and it would be difficult to provide precise figures at such an early stage.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder reminded Members that the issue around the impact on residents had been raised. She believed that so long as the building was adequately sound-proofed there would not be any issues.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder advised that she had met with residents on two occasions during the previous week all of whom had given positive feedback. The Portfolio Holder had also received a letter in support of the project.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder, as a Ward Councillor, along with a fellow Ward Councillor, had also met with residents and advised that the majority were in favour of an arts centre on the site.

A Member stated that although the Director of Resources and the Deputy Leader had indicated how much had been put aside for the scheme there was no indication of how much the scheme was likely to cost and how the budget would be achieved.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that Officers, the Executive and the Panel would monitor the project to move the project forward.

A Member believed that the vision could be achieved and would be a major attraction and stimulus for the City. The arts centre could be a centre point for people across the district and would enrich the economic and cultural life of the City.

The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder advised that Officers were working on a business plan for the arts centre but that it would not be ready in time for the next meeting of the Council. When the report was ready it would contain more information about revenue costs.

In response to a query from a Member the Director of Governance agreed to provide the latest revenue projections for the project as an addendum to the report to Council. Under those circumstances the Member was satisfied that matter was being addressed by the Executive and that it would not be necessary to refer the matter back to the Executive.

Members were satisfied that the Panel would be able to scrutinise the project and agreed that it would not be necessary to refer the matter back to the Executive or Council.

RESOLVED: That the matter shall not be referred back to the Executive and the decision shall take effect from the date of this meeting.

COSP.48/13 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Panel agreed that, as there were outside representatives in attendance in respect of Agenda Items A.3 – Sports Provision in the District and A.4 – Riverside Carlisle, that those items would be considered before Agenda Item A.2 – Overview Report and Work Programme and A.5 – Arts & Culture Strategy (Arts Centre).

COSP.49/13 SPORTS PROVISION IN THE DISTRICT

The Director of Community Engagement presented Report CD.41/13 that updated the Panel on the key findings of the Sports Facility Needs Assessment carried out across the City. The Report also provided background for a presentation given by Mr Eady from the consultancy company that had undertaken the assessment, King, Kavanagh and Page

(KKP). The Chief Executive of KKP had met with Members of the Panel in August 2012 at the commencement of its work and agreed to provide feedback.

The Director of Community Engagement introduced Mr Eady from KKP who provided a presentation on the key findings.

The key findings of the assessment were:

Sports Halls – There was a demonstrable need for an additional sports hall in Carlisle. The demand for sports halls was not meeting demand and that would be exacerbated further in 2016 and 2026 given the predicted increase in the population. Due to the dual use of the Sands Centre as a sports hall and arts and entertainment venue there was a shortage of consistently available space in the sports hall. That had a detrimental effect on other sports halls in Carlisle as they were constantly full due to lack of space across Carlisle. Longer term participation rates in sport were also affected, which in turn hindered the delivery of the Carlisle Sport and Physical Activity strategy.

Swimming Pools – There was a demonstrable need for a new 8 lane swimming pool alongside a smaller teaching pool. Although the study highlighted that supply was currently meeting demand, there were issues relating to the level of pool space which was available for community use. A further consideration was the level of quality of the swimming pool provision in Carlisle, with KKP's report highlighting the unwelcoming and dated nature of The Pools, which reduced demand. There were also concerns about the pools at Richard Rose Morton, Richard Rose Central Academy and Trinity.

Health and Fitness – There was a need to improve the current health and fitness offer in the district. Although the current fitness offer in Carlisle met with demand, the majority of the provision was in the private sector. More needed to be done to meet the needs of some of the more deprived communities, and to improve the quality of fitness provision in the district. Improving facilities for group fitness programmes (such as aerobics) would help to both increase income and drive up sport participation rates.

Playing Pitches – There was a demand for the development of at least one 3G football pitch in Carlisle and possibly two in a phased approach. The development of one or more 3G football pitches in Carlisle would allow for organised sports games to be played along with new formats of football at junior level. That approach would take the pressure off over-used playing pitches and allow local sports clubs to develop and expand. It would also free up sports hall space currently being used for five-a-side football, which should allow other sports the space and capacity to develop.

A list of consultees was appended to the report.

The finding of the consultant's work would be used to inform the production of a sports facility strategy and would contribute to achievement of the aim within the Carlisle Plan to "develop vibrant sports, arts and cultural facilities, showcasing the City of Carlisle."

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

- *There was no indication of support for disabled users. Were special facilities not required?*

Mr Eady explained that all new facilities were required to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and outlined some of the options available. He believed that the issue was a coaching issue rather than a facilities issue.

- *There was quite a lot of pay as you go provision around Carlisle but not a lot in rural areas.*

A market penetration exploration had been undertaken which indicated that many rural areas had not been reached and that there was room for sports facilities in those areas. Mr Eady confirmed that community centres had also been looked at and that information was included in the full report. The Director of Community Engagement advised that the report would be made available to Members in the near future as a number of the contributors had not yet seen the document.

- *The Sheepmount had not been included in the report.*

The Director of Community Engagement explained that the Sheepmount had been considered as part of the investigation.

- *The condition of the Pools had been a concern for a number of years. Would there be an increase in the cost of maintaining or repairing the pools?*

The Director of Community Engagement advised that there would be a marginal increase and that if there was a serious failure of the plant or equipment there would be a capital cost to the Council. The building was being maintained under the terms of the contract with Carlisle Leisure Limited. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the contract with Carlisle Leisure Limited was due to end in 2017 and Carlisle Leisure Limited had been asked for their views on the facility and discussions had been held concerning the future of the Pools.

- *Football provision in primary schools was not included in the report.*

The Director of Community Engagement explained that all primary schools had been contacted by either letter or telephone and some had been visited in person. The Deputy Chief Executive added that football leagues would have been contacted and any primary school playing fields would be picked up in their comments.

In response to a query from a Member the Director of Community Engagement advised that the Disability Access Group would be contacted as part of the investigation.

RESOLVED – 1) That Report CD.41/13 be noted.

2) That the report from KKP be circulated to Members as soon as possible.

COSP.50/13 RIVERSIDE CARLISLE

The Communities, Housing and Health Manager welcomed Mr Taylor and Mr Irving from Riverside Carlisle to the meeting.

The Director of Community Engagement submitted Report CD.38/13 that provided an update on joint working between Riverside Carlisle and Carlisle City Council.

The report updated the Panel on a number of areas of joint working including the Affordable Homes Programme, Disabled Facility Grants, Homelessness, Land Assets and Welfare Reform.

Mr Taylor advised that it was anticipated that by the end on 2013 Riverside would have an idea of the impact on residents of the Welfare Reform Act. Mr Irving explained that whilst the current affordable homes programme did not meet Riverside's aspirations they were working to identify land on which to build a pipeline of development.

The Panel scrutinised each of the areas of joint working in turn and raised the following comments and questions:

- *If people wish to downsize where are the available properties? There could be problems if younger and older people were mixed in the same area.*

Mr Taylor advised that Riverside were aware that such a mix was not always successful and that flats were more suitable for the current requirements of which there was a sufficient supply. Due to the Welfare Reform Act Riverside had seen a reduction in demand for 3 bedroom properties in some areas. Residents could use Cumbria Choice to access available properties. There could be difficulties if demand changed. Officers would continue to monitor any changes as a result of Welfare Reform and also the changes in benefits. Riverside would continue to use profiles to ensure the correct mix of residents.

Mr Taylor explained that Cumbria Choice gave details of all available properties then it was up to individuals to decide if the properties were of the quality and in an area where they wished to live. It was hoped that the system would lead to fewer refusals of properties. Due to the administration system there could a short time delay but Riverside continued to review the system and had no immediate plans to exit that system.

- *Anecdotal evidence was that there would be an increase in arrears.*

Mr Taylor advised that there had been a slight rise in the amount of arrears but overall Riverside was performing well and the level of arrears at the end of the financial year was the lowest than for some time. Mr Taylor explained that Riverside had contacted all tenants who would be affected by under-occupancy and had supported the 40-50 residents who had wished to move to a smaller property. Some of those that had opted to remain in their homes would struggle financially and Riverside officers would work with City Council officers to engage with those residents and support them.

- *What has been the impact on void levels?*

Mr Taylor stated that Officers were starting to see the impact and in particular the fall in demand for 3 bedroom properties in lower demand areas. Officers are starting to think about how changing needs can be resolved. Riverside believed there was a sufficient supply of 1 bedroom properties and were thinking about what to do with the 3 bedroom properties that they currently held. The houses could be re-designated if the third bedroom was small but that would create a loss of income for Riverside as their business plan assumed a level of income over a period of time. It would not be possible to re-designate whole areas but smaller pockets could be looked at.

- *What would be the impact of Welfare Reform of people in their 50s whose children had moved on and wished to remain in their properties?*

Mr Taylor believed that there would be an impact on that age group and such residents would be supported by Riverside and the City Council where necessary.

- *Some people affected by the Welfare Reform Act would not have been in the habit of paying any rental payments. Universal Credit would pass responsibility for rental payments to the tenant and it was likely that some would not pay on time. Would training be provided to prevent arrears building up and some explanation provided about the importance of making payments on time?*

Mr Taylor stated that Riverside had contacted all those tenants whose properties would be under-occupied from April 2013 and advice given on ways to pay their rent. If problems arose in the future the tenant would receive home visits offering advice on how to pay. There had been changes to the nature of Riverside's recovery process and the tenant would be notified as soon as a payment was late. Mr Taylor believed that in a year from now the picture would be clearer but tenants would be given several opportunities to pay their rent.

Universal Credit would also have a big impact on residents but it would be a gradual process and it was still not clear how the system would work. The Government had assured that systems would be in place to support vulnerable people. Riverside Group was also dealing with the matter and everyone was involved in the changes to the process.

- *Would it be possible to reinstate rent collectors?*

Mr Taylor explained that rent collectors calling on tenants had been an efficient method of collecting rent in the past, but these days it was not so safe to have someone carrying a large amount of money around the streets and stated that Riverside had a duty of care to its staff as well as its tenants.

- *Had there been an increase in the number of tenants taking in lodgers since Welfare Reform was introduced?*

Mr Taylor stated that only a few residents had taken that route. Riverside would consider young people in low wage employment sharing a house. There was a house share scheme county-wide but that tended to be older and younger people sharing a property.

- *Was there a system in place to check lodgers particularly when there were young children in the house?*

Mr Taylor explained that as tenants were given assured rights of occupations it was difficult as a landlord to interfere with who tenants allowed into their homes. Tenants would need to request permission to take in a lodger and if Riverside was aware of any antisocial behaviour issues they would need to consider how that information could be disclosed. Current vetting of potential tenants was quite intensive but due to data protection not all information was available to Riverside.

- *Under Housing Benefits regulations how would a contrived lodger be dealt with and would the income from the lodger be counted which would lead to the original tenant being no better off?*

Mr Taylor believed that it was a complex process and Officers had sought clarification prior to under-occupancy rules being changed. Having a lodger would affect a person's Housing Benefit situation. Riverside started a tenancy audit in 2012 and they were able to identify who was living in Riverside houses and offer advice where needed. The audit also ensured that the tenant named on the agreement was still living in the property and officers could also identify whether there was under-occupancy or repairs or support needed. Mr Taylor advised that there were approximately 1,000 units under-occupied the majority of which were under-occupied by 1 bedroom only. Therefore tenants in such properties would not be required to pay much more to stay in the property.

The Communities, Housing and Health Manager advised that work was being carried out across the Council with partner organisations to determine who was affected by the changes. The Riverside Board had identified potential arrears cases and it was expected that there could be some evictions by late autumn/early 2014. The Board had been looking at which groups would be most affected. They had also been monitoring the benefit cap that would be applied from mid July 2013 and how many families would be affected. Information was available from the Department of Work and Pensions but that information would need to be checked with the Housing Benefits and Council Tax teams. The Communities, Housing and Health Manager believed that potentially 161 children could be affected and Officers were looking at what kind of support would be required.

Mr Taylor advised that a lot of data was available across the Riverside Group regarding Welfare Reform which had been variable across the regions. Local connections were important to obtain data and maintain contacts.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Welfare Reform Board was made up of representatives from the City and County Councils, the Department of Work and Pensions, job centre, Riverside and Impact Housing. The Board pulled together information and focussed on those people most affected.

- *As stated in the report there had been an increase in the number of applications to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund. Could that increase be met from the budget?*

The Communities, Housing and Health Manager agreed to provide Members with information relating to the increase to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund.

RESOLVED –1) That the Riverside Carlisle representatives be thanked for their input in the meeting and welcomed the update on the partnership;

2) That Report CD.38/13 be noted and the Panel would look forward to a further update in February 2014

3) That the Communities Housing and Health Manager provide Members with budgetary information relating to the Discretionary Housing Payments.

COSP.51/13 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.16/13 which provided an overview of matters relating to the work of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and included the latest version of the work programme and Key Decisions of the Executive which related to the Panel.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that:

- The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 31 May 2013. The following issues fell within the remit of this Panel:

KD.015/13 Arts and Culture Strategy – to be considered later in the meeting.

- The following Minute Excerpts had been received from the Executive's meeting held on 30 May 2013:
EX.53/13 – CSP Partnership Plan

- The following Minute Excerpts had been received from the Executive's meeting held on 1 July 2013:
EX.076/13 – Representatives on Outside Bodies which would be considered at a future meeting following the appointment of the Leader at Council on 16 July 2013.

- Task Groups – it was agreed that there would be two Task Groups during the coming year. Councillors Miss Sherriff, Mrs Luckley, Mrs Mallinson and Layden would be part of the Hate Crime Task Group. Councillors Mrs Prest, Mrs Stevenson and Mrs Vasey would be part of the Customer Access Task Group.

- Work Programme – The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the current work programme and advised that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership would be considered at the meeting in March 2014. An updated report on transformation would be provided prior to the next meeting of the Panel. A report on CCTV would be considered at the meeting of the Panel on 22 August 2013. Although the Director of Community Engagement would not be available the Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder would be in attendance. A report on Community Centres would be considered at the meeting of the Panel scheduled for October 2013.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key decisions relevant to this Panel be noted;

COSP.52/13 ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY (ARTS CENTRE)

The Director of Community Engagement submitted report CD.40/13 concerning the potential development of an Arts Centre for Carlisle. The matter had been considered by the Executive at their meeting on 1 July 2013 when they made the following decision:

That the Executive:

1. Approved the Warwick Street Fire Station for development as an Arts Centre for Carlisle

2. Approved the increase in the capital programme from £586,000 to £1,064,500 for recommendation to Council, noting that the increase will be funded from additional capital receipts generated from the Asset Review Programme.
3. Approved the release of the current budget and re-profiling of the overall scheme, subject to Council approval above, with £50,000 being incorporated within the 2013/14 Capital Programme and £1,014,500 in the 2014/15 Capital Programme.
4. Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People in consultation with the Director of Community Engagement to produce and progress the plans to deliver the Arts Centre as detailed in report CD.37/13.
5. Make report CD.37/13 available for consideration by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Director of Community Engagement introduced Mr Hugh Champion to the Panel. Mr Champion was a recognised expert and development consultant in Arts Centres and had given advice and support whilst looking through the site options. The report commented upon the long history of exploring the idea of a mid-scale Arts Centre and performance venue in Carlisle, adding that the Carlisle Plan provided a pledge for the development of an Arts Centre within the City.

It was proposed that a venue be identified for an Arts Centre which could:

- bring a new performing arts and entertainment focus into the Carlisle, delivering an offer to the city and its wider hinterland.
- deliver exciting and developing programmes of quality arts and entertainments, aimed at building and broadening audiences.
- offer a varied range of opportunities for Carlisle residents as participants, creators and performers.
- stimulate local talent and build the profile of Carlisle and Cumbria's creative and digital industries sector. That would include supporting emerging, Carlisle based, commercial artists and designers.
- contribute distinctively to Carlisle's visitor offer, linking into, and being a resource for, festivals, events, projects and cultural providers.
- provide the foundation for future developments in arts and entertainment.

Having considered potential venues in Carlisle, the former Fire Station in Rickergate (a substantial building with straight forward structure on a prominent corner site on the edge of the historic quarter) was proposed as the preferred option.

Details of the proposed format, market potential, management and programme aspects, design concept and capital costs, and the anticipated timetable were provided.

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

- *Potential capital costs were included in the report. Was it in the Council's best interests to publish those figures prior to the project going out to tender? Who was preparing the tender documents? Would it be someone with specialist knowledge in that area?*

The Director of Community Engagement advised that advice had been sought from colleagues regarding whether the report should be considered in private. Whilst it was acknowledged that the information was sensitive it was agreed that it would not disadvantage the Council by considering the information in public. The Director did not

know whether there would be input from a technical specialist. Officers had been working on what the Council would like the Arts Centre to be.

- *The cooling off period appears to be one day only.*

The Director of Community Engagement explained that the tenders would be reviewed from 20 September 2013 and that would be the start of the cooling off period. That would give people time to amend their tender if necessary.

In response to a query the Director of Community Engagement advised that contingency had been built into the budget.

- *The plan shows a bar/cafe. Would a kitchen also be included?*

The Director of Community Engagement explained that the project was not yet at that level of detail.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that Day Cummins had been commissioned to produce the plans for the Arts Centre. Their work allowed the Executive to decide upon a preferred site. The project would now follow the proper process before coming to a final decision. Funds were available in the 2013/14 budget for specialist advice and progress reports would be submitted to the Panel throughout the process.

- *Were similar Arts Centres elsewhere struggling or were they successful?*

Mr Champion advised that it was a difficult time for the arts generally. When he first became involved the option for the Arts Centre was the Methodist Hall. When the fire station was first proposed Mr Champion did not believe it would be suitable but after further investigation he was satisfied that the building would be suitable. However the Arts Centre would need to be run in a business like manner with the right skills. He believed that the Centre should draw in a large footfall with meetings, conferences and headline acts.

With regard to the bar and kitchen, Mr Champion stated that it was important that there was a good catering offer where people could meet after work. It was important that it was not seen as a service of the Council and would require good coffee and a welcoming atmosphere. Staff should be flexible and multi skilled as they would be required to cover a range of duties within the Centre.

- *Previous reports had emphasised the need for catering quality and volume. Had the use of volunteers been considered particularly when performances were taking place?*

The Director of Community Engagement explained that the Arts Centre would require supporters who could make a contribution. There would be an important role for the community to ensure the Arts Centre was a success. A core staff would be required but there would also be a role for volunteers.

Mr Champion advised that whilst volunteers were very useful it was important to consider how they were rostered and that they were of the relevant age group to the programme.

- *People looking for performing arts were generally older people.*

- *It was very difficult to gain profit from catering and only by selling high volumes and having tough terms and conditions for staff.*

Mr Champion agreed that it would be difficult and that the Centre would need to trade on the best and most interesting commodities and the best quality. A lot of people like working in the arts and the Council had the opportunity to build up a highly motivated staff. Mr Champion confirmed that people using the Centre should be charged competitive rates for rooms and equipment.

Mr Champion confirmed that the Arts Centre would complement other arts facilities in the area and the staff at the brickyard were keen to work with the Council on the Arts Centre.

- *There were a lot of students in Carlisle and the college was currently undertaking a £5.3m arts centre in the college.*
- *The college would provide learning skills that could then be displayed in public in the Arts Centre. As there was a mix of size of venues it would be ideal for students. As well as the college the Centre could also be used by the University's performing arts students and technical volunteers may be available from the university. The University would also be looking for practice and performance space.*

The Director of Community Engagement advised that a lot of work had been done with the University and they were eager to work with the Council on the Arts Centre. The Centre would enable students to stay in Carlisle as a stepping stone to a further career. A selection of high quality student work had been on display at the University.

Mr Champion believed that the Council had a good opportunity to build up a good working relationship with the educational institutions. Arts facilities within university campuses did not generally make a huge impact on the community but could be a good source of volunteers and a good way for students to gain experience.

- *Had the Green Room been consulted on the proposals?*

The Director of Community Engagement advised that the Green Room were interested in what the Council were undertaking and wanted to be part of a place where people would visit.

RESOLVED: That Report CD.40/13 – Arts and Culture Strategy (Arts Centre) be noted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

During consideration of the above Item of Business, it was noted that the meeting had been in progress for 3 hours and it was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that Council Procedure Rule 9, in relation to the duration of meetings be suspended in order that the meeting could continue over the time limit of 3 hours.

(The meeting ended at 1.05pm)