



### HOUSING AND HEALTH ITEMS

1. **DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

I can report that in the period in question I have taken no delegated decisions regarding the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio.

2. **ISSUES ARISING FROM THE HOUSING CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON 1 OCTOBER 2001**

I would wish to draw Members' attention to three items in particular that were discussed at the inaugural meeting of the new HCG :

- We have agreed a Forward Plan of Meetings which will see the HCG meeting on a near monthly basis from now until the end of the current municipal year in April 2002.

I hope that – as with the HTWG which preceded it – this Group will play a vital role in informing the Executive's decisions through the direct input to our deliberations on LSVT of all political groups, tenants, the trade unions and expert advisors.

- The Group discussed a draft 'Consultation Plan' which is a very important document that will guide how both the City Council and Riverside conduct and co-ordinate their public consultation arrangements in the run up to next year's tenants' ballot.

This draft is now out for consultation with interested parties and I hope to be able to recommend a final version to the Executive shortly.

- Perhaps of greatest significance was the Group's discussions of Riverside's initial formal response to the Council's 13 'due diligence' requirements.

The response indicates where the respective officers and advisors have got to in the discussions so far and gives a clear 'statement of intent' without yet requiring the Council to sign-off the individual proposals.

The contents were separately reported to the Executive for information on 15 October and our advisors are in the process of evaluating the underlying Business Plan of the new RSL before the Executive can receive any formal recommendation on how to proceed with these.

Under this item I would just like to conclude by commenting further on the decision of the Labour Group on this Council not to participate in the work of the HCG.

I believe that it is essential for all political parties to be represented on the group, as this is a way in which the tenants can feel that the Council as a whole can support them in the consultation process. I hope the Labour Group will reconsider their decision and take up the two vacant posts on the Housing Consultative Group. If not I believe it gives a negative response to the Tenants of this City and does nothing to inspire confidence in Labour's commitment to work for the good of the tenants.

### 3. **LAUNCH OF 'CARLISLE HOUSING ASSOCIATION' ON 9 OCTOBER 2001**

I am pleased to be able to report on a highly successful event at Tullie House on 9 October which saw the new RSL jointly launched by the Council and Riverside.

The event saw the first showing of a specially commissioned video that Riverside have made about the proposed transfer and which will shortly be mailed out to all Council tenants and leaseholders.

It was particularly pleasing to welcome to Carlisle for the day so many Board Members, Senior Officers and Tenant Representatives from the Riverside Group and to give them a tour of the City and an opportunity to meet our own Tenant Representatives and Members. I am sure that this marks the beginning of a highly fruitful relationship between the two organisations.

### 4. **RECRUITMENT TO THE CARLISLE HOUSING ASSOCIATION BOARD**

I am pleased to be able to report that at the Executive Meeting on 15 October, Councillors Brian Dodd, Liz Mallinson, Judith Prest were nominated (with one Labour Member to be nominated) to the one third of seats on the Shadow Board of Carlisle Housing Association reserved for Council nominees. Recruitment to the remaining 4 places each for the Tenants/Leaseholders and Independents is well underway and the new Shadow Board should be up and running from mid-November 2001.

## 5. 'SUPPORTING PEOPLE' AND RENTS/SERVICE CHARGES

As part of the forthcoming budget preparation process at the Executive Meeting on 15 October one of the reports tabled by officers concerned proposed residential/service charges in relation to Housing Services – excluding the issue of property rents.

In this the Director drew attention to some proposed charge increases/new charges which were significantly in excess of the Council's 2002/03 budget policy guidance of RPI plus 1%. **I must make clear that these matters are not ones for local discretion by the Council and arise as a direct consequence of the combined effect of the introduction of the Government's new rent setting regime for social housing from April/2002 onwards plus the new 'Supporting People' regime from April 2003.**

The combined impact is to require Councils – such as Carlisle – who historically have 'rent-pooled' in whole or part service specific charges across their entire stock (such as for example the Housing Visitor Service) in future to desegregate these charges from the rents and introduce a separate charging regime for those who receive the services in question.

This represents a fundamental change in practice from the past and presents a significant challenge to the Council in implementing this in an equitable and transparent manner. At the same time it also may represent an additional source of income to the HRA by 'freeing-up' some of the rent income capacity, albeit to Government-determined purposes.

Prudently the Council had in fact commenced this process in April 2001 with the introduction for the first time of the elements of such a charging regime and had at that time anticipated phasing in the rent restructuring/service charge dis-aggregation element of the process over a number of years.

However, the Director was required to verbally update the Executive at the meeting of the receipt that same morning of detailed guidance from the DTLR on their requirements in this matter which – when taken in conjunction with the anticipated HRA subsidy changes to take account of rent restructuring – provisionally look to require the entire process to effectively be commenced during 2002/03, in other words requiring all the necessary changes to be implemented in the forthcoming budget process.

Urgent work to fully assess the impact of this is now in hand by officers and I anticipate a detailed report being available for the Executive's meetings in November. This is a highly complex area and one which poses the Council with a major task in making sense of these proposals in plain language terms for service recipients, but I can assure the Council that this is our ambitious objective.

In concluding I would particularly want to re-assure tenants and other service users who are currently receiving these services at nil cost due to their current entitlement to housing benefit that as we currently understand it these concessions WILL continue to apply to the new charging arrangements for the foreseeable future.

## 6. SHIFTING THE BALANCE – NHS REFORMS

The Department of Health is to modernise arrangements for commissioning and delivery of Health and Social Services with the aim of integrating services.

The key themes of the policy are :

- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Promoting independence
- Funding linked to performance

It is proposed that the balance of power will be shifted to a more local level, in an attempt to meet local needs.

It clearly defines Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) as the lead in assessing need, planning Health Services and securing all Health Services and improving health.

It proposes a major change in the strategic management of the NHS with a substantial reduction in Health Authorities. Approximately 30 Strategic Authorities will replace the existing 95 Health Authorities.

### LOCAL IMPLICATIONS

It is important that the move to the North West does not jeopardise the long established links with the North East for Clinical Services.

Strategic investment decisions will mainly be made outside the area.

The PCT's in the area do not align themselves with the Local Authority boundaries. With Eden PCT covering part of the Council area of Carlisle, Eden and Allerdale.

PCT's are being strongly encouraged by the Government to develop relationships with Local Authorities.

The proposals recognise that there is an important role for Overview and Scrutiny in providing an oversight to the NHS.

Shifting the balance of power clearly contains a number of proposals that are likely to impact on local people and the role of the City Council. We should be playing a role in these changes and securing services that take account of local peoples' needs, and see that they are met.

This matter has now been taken up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Community.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

### Housing and Sustainability Section

The Kerbside Recycling Project is still on course, approval of final proposals to be sought on Wednesday 17 October 2001.

Local Housing Condition Survey, Consultants are now verifying the report after concerns expressed by the officers.

Landlords Forum, meeting is scheduled for 30 October 2001.

### Environmental Protection Section

Work is progressing on contaminated land in the area; further samples are needed but some difficulty due to Foot and Mouth restrictions.

On the Health and Safety front new guidance will require far higher standards of inspection to ensure all premises are risk free.

### Food Safety

We are again suffering in this department due to the lack of interest in the post. Only two applications received for the vacancies. Both applicants withdrew due to the salary offered.

### Biological Security

We are working with Emergency Planning to define the potential risks from the current Anthrax scare.

The Education/Awareness Campaign on Dog Fouling is gaining momentum. 'Trooper' the dog character selected to front this (one of our Wardens in a high quality dog uniform/outfit) is proving popular in the schools. I have been asked to take part in some of the events to be organised, so the suit could have another occupant for the day.

## 8. LEISURE AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Andrew Hay (26), Cremator Operator, who was the subject of an unprovoked assault in the City Centre on 29 September remains in hospital but has now been brought back to the Cumberland Infirmary where he is making slow but steady progress. The Council would, I am sure, wish to send him their best wishes for a speedy and full recovery.

Bits Park Tennis Development now in use. £50,000 grant from the LTA has enabled resurfacing of the Courts, floodlighting etc. We will also be getting a City Tennis Grant to assist in the development of the game in Carlisle. They will formally open in the Spring (it's too late in the year now to paint the surfaces, this will be done April/May with a formal opening in time for Wimbledon!

Sheepmount bid is now progressing through Sport England. A Case Officer is going through the elements of the proposal and we hope to have a result by Christmas but remember it is a lottery and we can only keep our fingers crossed.

Midnight Basketball Scheme about to be launched in Harraby School. HAZ funded open to all but will particularly take referrals from the Youth Offending Team. Two hours of basketball will be preceded by ½ hour sex/drug education. Will be moving to Upperby in due course.

Cardiac Rehabilitation – Exercise on Prescription. One year HAZ funding. Disappointing take up. Redesigning scheme to enable referrals from the Practice Nurses as well as doctors, also launching poster campaign in surgeries.