

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 19 JANUARY 2012 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Rutherford (Chairman), Councillors Bowditch, Craig, Mrs Farmer and Mrs Vasey.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Bloxham – Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Bowman – Economic Development Portfolio Holder

EEOSP.01/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors McDevitt and Mrs Rob son.

EEOSP.02/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

EEOSP.03/12 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That agenda item A.4 – Carlisle Enterprise Centre be considered as a private item under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the matter relates to the Council's financial and business affairs.

EEOSP.04/12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2011 be noted.

EEOSP.05/12 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

There were no matters that had been the subject of call in.

EEOSP.06/12 – OVERVIEW REPORT INCORPORATING THE WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.04/12 which provided an overview of matters related to the Environment and Economy Overview

and Scrutiny Panel's work. Details of the latest version of the work programme were also included.

Mrs Edwards reported that:

- The Forward Plan of the Executive covering the period 1 January 2012 to 30 April 2012 had been published on 16 December 2011. Mrs Edwards advised that there had been one item which related to this Panel, KD.032/11 – Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership's Enhanced partnership Working Project – Conclusions of Stage 2. The Executive would make their decision on 13 February 2012 and the Panel's comments from the short workshop to be held at the rise of this Panel meeting would be included in the report to the Executive.

- The following references from the Executive had been included in the Report:

EX.165/11 - Budget 2012/13 from Executive 12 December 2011

EX.173/11 – Charges Review from Executive on 19 December 2011

- The next meeting of the Panel had been scheduled for 23 February 2012. It had been announced at Council on 10 January 2012 that a special meeting of full Council had been called for the afternoon of the 23 February to appoint the Honorary Recorder and it was suggested that the Environment and Economy Panel meeting be moved to Wednesday 22 February 2012.

- The next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Group would take place on 1 February 2012. The Group would consider the Annual Report and if Members had any other items they should contact the Chairman or the Scrutiny Officer.

In considering the Work Programme Members raised the following issues for inclusion:

- The Chairman requested an update on the Green Spaces Review at a future meeting of the Panel.

The Director of Local Environment informed that Panel that the consultation document had been sent out and an update would be available on the redesign of the work and themes that had been identified. The final report would be given to staff on 15 February and could then be considered by this Panel at its meeting on 22 February 2012.

- A Member asked when an update on the Tourism Transformation would be available.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder responded that the Enterprise Centre Review had taken priority but the Transformation of the Tourism Service was due to start and an update would be available for the Panel in April.

- The Deputy Chief Executive (Mr Crossley) reminded the Panel of the ongoing work of the Business Improvement District (BID) and suggested that an update on the

work be provided at a future meeting of the Panel to assist in the final decision making process.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That Minute Excerpts EX.165/11 Budget 2012/13 from Executive on 12 December 2011 and EX.173/11 – Charges Review from Executive on 19 December 2011 be noted.

3) That the next meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel be moved from 23 February 2012 to 22 February 2012.

4) That the following items be included in the Work Programme for the Panel:

- update on the Green Spaces Review to the February meeting;
- update on the Transformation of the Tourism Service to the April meeting; and
- update on the Business Improvement District to the April or June meeting.

EEOSP.07/12 – ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF THE COUNCIL

The Safety, Health and Environmental Manager (Mr Majhi) submitted Report GD.67/11 providing a progress report on the environmental performance of the City Council. The report included updates on the environmental performance indicators, current energy use within directly controlled City Council buildings and CO₂ reduction from local authority operations. The report provided an update on work that had taken place within the Council to reduce the Council's energy use. The Council's Environmental Policy Statement would be reviewed in January 2012 and re-signed by the newly appointed Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Mr Majhi explained that the work within the report, as with health and safety, was a cross cutting piece of work which spanned across Directorates and Portfolio Holders. He outlined the roles of the Facilities Team within the Resources Directorate and the Green Spaces Team within the Local Environment Directorate and how his role in the Governance Directorate fits in with the other Directorates. He added that he also liaised with external organisations including the County Council, CBEN, The Carbon Trust and he was the lead officer whenever the Councils Environmental Performance was being externally audited.

The report informed Members of the gas and electricity consumption in directly controlled City Council buildings which showed a reduction in gas consumption in 3 out of the 4 main sites, and a reduction in 2 of the 4 sites in electricity consumption. However there was an overall reduction in both gas and electricity consumption across the 4 sites.

Mr Majhi also explained the issues regarding the Green Travel Plan and advised that Business Mileage undertaken by Staff and Members remained unchanged in 2010/11 compared with that of the previous year. This still represented a sustained

reduction of 27.3% in comparison with the 2007/08 baseline years. One explanation for this was the Council's shared service and the increase in staff travelling to and from other authorities.

Mr Majhi advised Members that the City Council had retained the Gold level of the Cumbria Business Environment Network Awards in March 2011 and achieved or retained 7 Green Flag Awards for the Tullie House garden, Bitts Park, Hammonds Pond, Richardson Street Cemetery and the Crematorium, Kingmoor Nature Reserve, St Michael's Churchyard, Stanwix and Talkin Tarn Country Park.

He also explained the work undertaken in respect of the Invest to Save programme and equipment renewals.

Mr Majhi reminded the Panel of the introduction solar panels to the Civic Centre which would provide payback after 9 years and had a yield of up to 9%. This increase in yield compared to the original 5% was as a direct result of the falling price on infrastructure. This in itself resulted from the Government reducing its Feed in Tariff incentive scheme payments. This had been challenged in court and the Council may still receive the original higher Tariff for projects completed before the end of March 2012.

He added that there was a potential opportunity to use the surplus equipment and infrastructure which firms had been left with as organisations pulled out of such schemes as a direct result of the reduction in feed in Tariff being brought forward by the Government. He reported that demand was low and therefore became a buyers market where equipment was becoming cheaper. He suggested that the top three Solar Projects be re-examined and re-priced to see what new returns and yields could be achieved; however, capital investment would need to be made and agreed by Executive.

In conclusion Mr Majhi stated that Members and Officers within the City Council understood the importance of investing in new, energy efficient technologies, even in difficult financial situations. That investment had resulted in continued reductions in the Council's carbon emissions and helped mitigate the continued rise in energy costs. Energy efficient equipment would continue to be introduced into Council owned buildings whenever financially viable. The next key steps were now being undertaken and the benefits in terms of overall energy consumption would start to be realised in the current financial year.

In considering the matter, Members raised the following comments and questions:

- What was the Executive's view with regard to changes made to the tariff for the solar panels?

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder commented that the Executive had made the decision to place solar panels on the roof of the Council Chamber and the project would go ahead. He explained that the Executive was in favour of the Invest to Save scheme but had to give consideration to financial implications of funding the scheme. He added that he would like to see more investment in alternative energy.

- Was it envisaged that the Civic Centre would ever make the same reductions as the Tullie House building?

Mr Majhi responded that the windows in the Civic Centre had all been replaced and were being insulated. The windows in the Revenues and Benefits Section were being replaced and the pipe work within the section was being insulated. He added that the walls of the building did allow heat out but it was not clear how this could be remedied.

- There had been a 2.1% increase in gas consumption within the Civic Centre, was there a problem with the new boiler?

Mr Majhi informed the Panel that since the 2.1% increase the old boilers had been replaced with new condensing boilers. There had been some teething issues with the piping for the new boilers but this had been resolved and work to level out the temperature differentials between floors had been undertaken by the Facilities Team.

- What was being done to address the issue of increased staff travel due to shared services?

Mr Majhi advised that the issue did need to be investigated further. The Council had a number of options such as video conference facilities, the use of Skype or increased car sharing to consider and reminded the Panel that there would always be a requirement for managers to travel to the alternative offices which they had management responsibility for.

- Why had the Eden Rounds caused a large increase in transport CO₂ emissions?

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that the contractual arrangements for the collection of green waste was ending and this would be last time the figures would be reported.

RESOLVED – That Report GD.67/11 Environment Performance of the Council be welcomed.

EEOSP.08/12 ECONOMY AND SKILLS WORKSHOP

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) submitted report OS.05/12 providing a summary of the Economy and Skills Workshop which had been organised on behalf of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel and held on 15 November 2011. The workshop involved several local education and training providers, Connexions, Job Centre Plus and a selection of local employers. The report made recommendations that were intended to enhance the good work undertaken in that area and foster further relationships and communications channels between all of the partners concerned.

The key issues which emerged from the discussions were set out in the report and covered a wide range of issues and suggestions for future development.

It was agreed that the workshop had been worthwhile and there was an appetite for a forum, and it was important to include medium and small businesses. There were some excellent examples of education and training providers working together and also with local employers to fill identified gaps.

It was agreed that if employers were able to identify their future plans and skills requirements training providers would be able to prepare accordingly. It would also be useful to create a central point to collate and disperse that information, which could enable providers to develop and introduce courses based on a specific demand.

When developers approached the City Council with specific building projects, Officers in planning and Economic Development could use that opportunity to identify future trends.

Although it was appreciated that EU law must be adhered to with regard to tendering large capital projects, Members were concerned that local companies were unable to compete with large national companies and would like to see more agreements and/or sub-contracts which enable the employment of young people.

The Chairman reminded the Panel that the workshop recommended that the Carlisle Economic Partnership look to develop a forum for providers and employers to share and exchange information with regard to skills provision and demand. It was also recommended that a key contact be established for employers and providers to record potential demand for skills and gaps in provision and that the Director of Community Engagement follow up with Connexions their concerns of communication with the hard to reach 16-18 year olds. She added that the role of the Council was to promote the local economy.

The Director of Economic Development (Mrs Meek) explained that the Council's role was as a facilitator to ensure providers had the right course in place and to ensure local business know where to go for their range of requirements. She understood that small businesses had some difficulty in attending forums and there was a requirement for an alternative way of engaging small businesses to enable them to identify and address their issues.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder commented that Economy and Skills were very important for the future of the City and the participants of the workshop had provided good feedback.

A Member suggested that personal visits, with a survey, were made to local businesses to gather the relevant information.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that it had previously proved difficult to arrange suitable times to visit small businesses and a visit to each business would be extremely labour intensive due to the number of small business across the District. She felt that any survey would need to be handled carefully to ensure all businesses were fully involved. She added that the Chamber of Commerce had contact with many businesses but it needed to be more focused to ensure all businesses were involved.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Mr Crossley) felt that it would be useful to know what level of commitment the Council would like officers to focus on this matter. He understood that many providers were not well connected and that the Council could facilitate better communication. It would also be useful for the Panel to ask the Carlisle Economic Partnership to focus on the issues in the report and come back to the Panel for a full debate.

He added that each organisation would have an outlook or view of the future of their workforce and he reminded that Panel that there had been a lot of focus of young people in the District but the projections for the future of the City showed an aging population with good skills and experience.

The Chairman felt that it was important to address the needs of people living and working in Carlisle now and protect the businesses that were here now.

RESOLVED – 1) That Report OS.05/12 be approved as an accurate reflection of the content of the Economy and Skills workshop;

2) That the recommendations as set out in report OS.05/12 be approved and be referred to the Carlisle Economic Partnership for their detailed consideration;

3) That an update be submitted to the Panel at its April 2012 meeting.

EEOSP.09/12 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the minutes) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

EEOSP.10/12 CARLISLE ENTERPRISE CENTRE

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 3)

The final report of the Carlisle Enterprise Centre Task and Finish Group had been considered by the Executive on 12 December 2012 (EX.169/11).

The Executive had decided:

“That the Executive had given consideration to the reference from the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel concerning the Carlisle Enterprise Centre and would provide a full response to the Task Group’s recommendations at the next meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel.”

The Chairman expressed the Panel's disappointment that there had not been a written response from the Executive to the recommendations set out in the final report of the Task and Finish Group.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder responded that she had not submitted a written response because she had wanted to provide the Panel with the most up to date information as possible. She agreed to submit a written response to all Members of the Panel.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Director of Economic Development (Mrs Meek) and the Property Services Manager (Mr Simmons) then gave a detailed response to each of the Task and Finish Groups recommendations.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder reported that work had been carried out on several of the recommendations including a survey to all tenants, a copy of which had been circulated. She explained that 18 of the 30 tenants surveyed had responded and she outlined the feedback from the surveys.

She informed the Panel that maintenance work to the exterior of the building had begun and a number of jobs would be carried out whilst the scaffolding was in place.

The Panel were concerned with regard to the roof of the building and Mr Simmons informed the Panel that there were a number of options available and added that a final decision would be made following the Review of the Centre.

The Portfolio Holder explained that a number of the recommendations would be included in the Review of the Enterprise Centre and a report would be submitted to the Panel on completion of the Review.

The Panel asked for a regular monitoring report on the Enterprise Centre to monitor the maintenance of the building and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. They also asked for financial information with regard to the cost of the maintenance work to the building.

RESOLVED – 1) That a written response to the recommendations of the Enterprise Centre be circulated to all Members of the Environment and Economy Panel;

2) That a further update report on both the internal review of the Enterprise Centre and the implementation of the Task Groups recommendations be submitted to the Panel on 5th April 2012;

3) That this report also include the cost of the work carried out and/or scheduled to be undertaken at the Enterprise Centre.

(The meeting ended at 12.10pm)