

Agenda item
9(3)

PORTFOLIO:

CORPORATE RESOURCES

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR
MRS J GEDDES**

KEY DECISIONS

All key decisions are as in the minutes of Executive decisions.

NON KEY DECISIONS

PF.011/03 – Funding for Ward Councillors Notice Boards

TRAINING

Various training courses are available to members that can be booked through Linda Mattinson in the Member Support and Employee Services Unit. Information is regularly sent by e-mail to all members, to try to assist both personal development of members, and providing the basic skills required for members to perform their roles as Councillors.

I have attended three courses that not only helped my own personal development, but confirmed to me that good quality training was being delivered to our staff and members.

The courses attend were as follows:

Delivering Successful Speeches by NWE0 on 21 March 2003

Advanced Communication Skills at NCTC on 26 March 2003

Disability Awareness at the Civic Centre on 2 April 2003

EMERGENCY PLANNING

As Members will be aware on Wednesday 2nd April there was a major fire in Carlisle, which resulted in the evacuation of a substantial number of residents. As part of our well-established Emergency Planning arrangements the City Council opened a Reception Centre for evacuees at the Sands Centre.

The Reception Centre remained in operation until the afternoon of Thursday 3rd April when residents were able to return to their homes. During this period the Council, along with partner agencies including the County Council, WRVS, Carlisle Leisure Limited and Carlisle Housing Association, provided food and accommodation for those residents who needed it. The Council also made arrangements for the care of a number of people with special needs.

The incident was handled smoothly and efficiently again proving the value and quality of the contingency plans, which we have in place for these unfortunate eventualities. In all this was a good example of partnership working.

EAST CUMBRIA COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

Community Health Councils are to be abolished on August 31st 2003 – just over three years after the government announced that it was their intention to do away with Community Health Council's and establish new organisations to take over their various responsibilities:-

PALS (Patient Advice Liaison Service) – providing information and advice are now functioning in every NHS Trust across the country.

ICAS (Independent Complaints Advocacy Service) – an independent complaints service supporting people who wish to make a complaint about the NHS care they have (or have not) received is now being piloted in this and many other areas.

Patient Forums representing the interests of patients are to be set up in every Trust. Their administrative support is to be contracted out to the voluntary and not-for profit sector – an opportunity for a consortium of Cumbrian CVS's.

Local Authorities, under Overview & Scrutiny, have had transferred to them the Community Health Council's powers and responsibilities in consultation on NHS service changes.

NORTH WEST EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATION

I attended an Executive Board Meeting of the North West Employer's Organisation on 08 April 2003. This meeting reported on the work of the organisation including the work of the Pay Commission, which is ongoing.

An item of interest to members was the current progress of a Foundation Degree in Community Governance, and methods of funding. Although the course is available through the University of Salford there is no reason why the course cannot be delivered in Carlisle if there is enough interest. Other organisations such as School Governors and the Voluntary Sector may have people interested in this type of qualification.

NWEO are currently looking for an elected member to act as a Project Worker, in the form of a consultancy, to undertake a scoping exercise on behalf of the organisation. Further details will be circulated to members in due course.

North West Employer's Organisation Regional Overview Committee, which I attended on 04 March 2003 reported on:

- New political structures in Human Resources, data already collected would be compared to data collected later in the year and a "now and then" report will be published at a later date. Further information will be obtained from the Personnel Officer groups of the five geographical areas and portfolio holders will network for each of the North West Local Authorities. A summary report of the position so far will be made available at the next meeting on 23 April 2003.
- As Chairman I elected to lead on the issue of CPA asking Members present where they were in respect of inspections. Members of County and Unitary Authorities agreed to support Members of District Authorities in preparation for their inspections.
- A discussion took place on Member issues and in particular how to encourage and recruit younger Members with possible links to a Youth Parliament.
- Councillors' allowances, tax and benefits were discussed. A booklet published by LGIU, is available to assist Members. This can be obtained from the Payroll Section of the Member Support and Employee Services Unit.
- The Committee was updated on the new discrimination legislation, due to come into effect in December 2003. Also, that the Government is consulting on proposals for a single equity body. A copy of the Home Office's Guide to Diversity Training will be located in the Members Library as soon as it is available.
- Members were asked if they had any views on the problem of recruitment and retention of staff and in particular Environmental Health Officers (EHO). This was considered to be a national problem and could only be solved by looking at the overall package on a local basis.

ACCOMMODATION / SPACE PLANNING

As from 20 March 2003 the new Conservative Group Office on 9th Floor became available to the Members. The work has begun in the area of the old Conservative Group Office, to make provision for the reception desks in the temporary Customer Contact Centre.

The new staff room that is also situated on 9th Floor is anticipated to be handed over to the staff on 17 March 2003. This will be a valuable facility for staff Members to relax in an environment away from the office.

OTHER COMMITMENTS

On Wednesday 09 April I attend the launch of a play by Carlisle Carers Association that highlighted the problems facing young carers during their lives. This was an important piece of work presented in the Theatre at North Cumbria Technology College in a response to a request made by the Association. Funding has been secured to ensure that this play can tour around schools in the Carlisle and Eden area.

This was a very moving piece of work and I am sure it will raise awareness of the problems that this isolated group of children face every day.

A pack will be available for Members in the Members Library, which contains telephone and e-mail contact numbers if anyone feels that they can be of assistance to the Carlisle Carers Association.