

**JOINT MEETING BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND REPRESENTATIVES
FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS**

TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2011 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Mitchelson (Chairman) (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor J Mallinson (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor J Bainbridge (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor R Bloxham (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor M Bowman (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor G Ellis (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor J Geddes (Carlisle City Council)

Councillor R Auld (Chairman, Carlisle Parish Councils
Association)

Mrs G Dumbleton (Parish Liaison Officer, CALC)
Councillor P Brown (Arthuret Parish Council)
Councillor Mrs I Forsyth (Arthuret Parish Council)
Mrs K Johnson (Arthuret Parish Council)
Councillor M Pate (Beaumont Parish Council)
Mrs V Sealby (Burgh-by-Sands Parish Council)
Councillor J Stonebridge (Burgh-by-Sands Parish Council)
Councillor K McIntosh (Cummersdale Parish Council)
Councillor B Craig (Dalston Parish Council)
Councillor J Kelsey (Dalston Parish Council)
Councillor W Graham (Hayton Parish Council)
Councillor H Kay (Hethersgill Parish Council)
Councillor J Harris (Irthington Parish Council)
Councillor M Ridley (Irthington Parish Council)
Councillor W Bundred (Kirkandrews on Esk Parish Council)
Councillor W Little (Orton Parish Council)
Mr D Johnson (St Cuthbert Without Parish Council)
Mrs S Kyle (Scaleby and Walton Parish Councils)
Councillor C Nicholson (Stanwix Rural Parish Council)
Councillor Ms J Holland (Wetheral Parish Council)
Councillor Ms M Robinson (Wetheral Parish Council)
Mrs S Tarrant (Wetheral Parish Council)

ALSO PRESENT :

Ms M Mooney (Town Clerk and Chief Executive)
Dr J Gooding (Strategic Director and Deputy Chief Executive)
Mr D Crossley (Strategic Director)
Ms A Culleton (Assistant Director (Local Environment))
Mr K Gerrard (Assistant Director (Community Engagement))
Mr M Lambert (Assistant Director (Governance))
Mr P Mason (Assistant Director (Resources))
Ms J Meek (Assistant Director (Economic Development))

Ms L Hutchinson (Rural Support Officer)
Ms Z Sutton (Rural Development Officer)

Ms S Pennycook, Chief Executive, Carlisle Youth Zone

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Claxton (Chief Officer, CALC), Mrs P Macdonald (Orton Parish Council) and Councillor I Powley (St Cuthbert Without Parish Council).

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the joint meeting. He apologised that, due to adverse weather conditions at the time, it had been necessary to rearrange the meeting from the originally scheduled date of 29 November 2010.

The Chairman reported that, subsequent to the previous joint meeting, Councillor Mrs Luckley (Community Engagement Portfolio Holder) had resigned from the City Council's Executive. He introduced Councillors Bainbridge (Housing Portfolio Holder) and Mrs Geddes (Community Engagement Portfolio Holder) who now served on the Executive.

In addition, he reported that Ms J Meek had recently been appointed as Assistant Director (Economic Development).

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting between the City Council's Executive and Representatives of Parish Councils held on 14 June 2010 were circulated.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be received and agreed as a true record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Pursuant to Minute 5. 4) of the June 2010 meeting, Councillor Auld requested an update on the position regarding the Sands Centre development.

In response the Chairman explained that, although the City Council now had the benefit of planning permission, the project would not be progressed in the immediate future due to the current difficult financial climate.

Pursuant to Minute 10. 2) of the June 2010 meeting, Mrs Dumpleton asked when the notes on the maintenance of Rural Footpaths would be forthcoming.

In response, the Strategic Director and Deputy Chief Executive undertook to provide that information.

RESOLVED – That the Strategic Director and Deputy Chief Executive forward information on the maintenance of Rural Footpaths to the Secretary, Carlisle Parish Councils Association for circulation.

5. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided an update on progress with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) commenting that, as Parish Council representatives would be aware, the creation of a Local Enterprise Partnership for Cumbria had been successful in the first tranche of applications. That constituted good news for Cumbria, which was not the case for neighbouring authorities who were now working towards submissions as part of the next tranche.

The LEP Board had now been established, with the private sector taking the lead in partnership with the public sector.

A Steering Group has also been set up, tasked with giving consideration to the composition of the Cumbria LEP Board. The Steering Group had recommended that the LEP Board comprise 12 members and, in accordance with Government requirements, that representation across the private and public sector was 50/50.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that the appointment of the six members representing the private sector would be facilitated by the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce. Mr George Beveridge, Deputy Managing Director at Sellafield, had been appointed as interim Chairman.

She added that the public sector representation would consist of:

- 1 representative from the County Council;
- 3 representatives from the District Councils;
- 1 representative from the Lake District National Park; and
- 1 representative from Skills / Education (the Principal of Carlisle College)

It was not yet clear when the first meeting would take place, but the Agenda was extensive. The relationship with the North West was of key importance and the public sector representatives would do all that they could to support the private sector.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that £1.4 billion would be available within the Regional Growth Fund (RFG) over three years. The deadline date for bids was 21 January 2011. A Technical Team had been established by the Cumbria Chair to look at the bids, with a Task and Finish Group (comprising leading members from the private/public sectors) to consider the technical team's recommendations. The key point of note was that the RFG was there to ensure that the private sector could fill the gap in areas which would lose out as a result of public sector cuts.

Carlisle had submitted an excellent bid (£1.6m), led by the Tourism Partnership, which was being looked at by the Technical Team. In addition to certain indirect benefits, that bid would have a direct positive impact in areas such as tourism and the provision of jobs. The project timeframe was three years.

RESOLVED – That the report of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive be received.

6. YOUTH ZONE UPDATE

Ms S Pennycook, Chief Executive of Carlisle Youth Zone, gave a presentation to the joint meeting. She explained the need for the Youth Zone and that it had been modelled on the Bolton Lads and Girls Club. The OnSide Northwest Aim was “to build a network of 21st Century Youth Centres across the North West which will give young people top quality, safe and affordable places to go in their leisure time”

A three step support plan had been put in place for the Youth Zone which included private sector development, local engagement and facilities development. Each partnership would be established as a fully independent charity with its own Board of Trustees.

Ms Pennycook outlined the ‘ideal’ fundraising ratio for the Zone and explained that the Youth Zone in Carlisle was the very first of its type. She further outlined the consultation that had taken place for the Zone, together with the emerging themes. The four aims of the Youth Zone were:

- To encourage healthy lifestyles
- To develop positive behaviour, helping young people to deal with challenges and build positive relationships
- To reduce crime, discriminatory and anti-social behaviour
- To raise aspirations – exposing young people to new and inspiring experiences, building confidence, self esteem and self efficacy

Ms Pennycook added that there was a mixture of private sector expertise and public sector interest in the Zone, and that the Board was private sector led. The Zone was keen to provide additional activities and to work with local providers to avoid replication and timetable clashes. The Zone would provide placement opportunities through partners and would have open and transparent working practices with local groups.

Ms Pennycook also highlighted the staff structure for the Zone; details of available facilities and activities. Membership of the Youth Zone would cost £5.00 per year or 50p per visit; it would be open 52 weeks a year when the schools were closed. 50 volunteers would be enrolled by the opening and there would be 13 full time staff. The annual running cost would be £1m raised locally.

The Youth Zone would be a learning organisation and would assist with volunteer development, placements, training, and apprenticeships and would strengthen local youth work economy.

In conclusion, Ms Pennycook outlined the key considerations and issues for the Youth Zone and explained the manner by which the success of the Zone would be monitored.

Councillor Auld commented upon the importance of the Youth Zone working with organisations within the rural area and questioned how Ms Pennycook envisaged that taking place in practice.

Ms Pennycook responded that a full-time member of staff was in post and had commenced her work. There was, however, only one mini bus which was limiting. A great deal needed to be done and staff would work with existing parish organisations to identify need. It may be possible to offer a bus service to enable young people to take part in holiday programmes.

Councillor Auld asked whether existing parish organisations would have the opportunity to visit the Youth Zone and see what was on offer.

In response, Ms Pennycook said that 'soft openings' would be undertaken over a period of six weeks to bring stakeholders together. Any Parish Council which was particularly interested in a soft visit should contact the Youth Zone.

Councillor Holland (Wetheral) questioned the flexibility of the project e.g. would bus passes be available to enable young people to visit the Youth Zone after school and then return home?

Ms Pennycook indicated that the aim was to be as flexible as possible and the above point was one well made.

RESOLVED – That the presentation provided by the Chief Executive of Carlisle Youth Zone be received and circulated in conjunction with the Minutes of this meeting.

7. LOCALISM BILL

The Strategic Director referred to the extremely worthwhile and interesting CPCA Conference held on 15 January 2011 which included a session on the Localism and Decentralisation Bill, with particular reference to Community Led Planning.

He outlined in some detail the following six essential actions to deliver decentralisation and Localism Bill measures which were of particular relevance and importance:

- Lifting the burden of bureaucracy – issues such as Regional Spatial Strategies and the abolition of the Standards Board regime were of particular interest. A report setting out the Local Development Scheme for the period 2011 – 2014 listing the timetable and stages of work for the Local Development Framework Development Plan documents would be considered by the Council's Executive on 19 January 2011

- Empowering communities to do things their way – general power of competence and the reform of the planning system were of particular interest to the Executive and Assistant Director (Resources)
- Increased local control of public finance
- Diversify the supply of public services – this issue was picked up in the Council's Corporate Plan
- Open up government to public scrutiny – issues such as Chief Officers' remuneration and the possibility of publishing items of expenditure over £500 were the subject of debate
- Strengthen accountability to local people – e.g. the submission of petitions

The Strategic Director then circulated copies of an extract from the Council's Corporate Plan which detailed areas which the Council was currently focussing upon.

In conclusion, he said that the Localism Bill provided the City and Parish Councils the opportunity to raise issues of interest and obtain feedback.

Councillor Auld commented that, from a Parish Council perspective, the core issue was around the benefits which parishes may glean from the Localism Bill. It was therefore important that Parish Councils looked at parish plans to ensure that they 'ticked the right boxes'.

Councillor Bowman echoed the Strategic Director's comments regarding the importance of the Localism Bill and thanked the Chairman of the Carlisle Parish Councils Association for arranging the Conference held on 15 January last. She further paid tribute to the excellent and informative presentation provided by Mr Chris Hardman at the Conference.

The Strategic Director advised that interaction could be undertaken on a number of levels e.g. through the Local Enterprise Partnership. He added that the Assistant Director (Economic Development) and the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) would have fundamental roles with regard to planning and engagement with people.

RESOLVED – That the report of the Strategic Director be received.

8. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW

Dr Gooding outlined the background to and wider context of the 2011/12 budget, commenting that previously focus had centred upon the Transformation Programme and the need to achieve £3m in savings over three years. Although the achievement of those savings was positive for the City Council, the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review imposed a 26% reduction in Revenue Grants to Local Authorities over the next four years (to be front loaded, so 12% reduction for

2011/12), as a result of which the Council needed to make a further £2.5m savings from the Revenue Budget. In addition, there would be a 45% reduction in Capital Grants.

The options open to the Council were:

- to reduce the discretionary services it provided, which could be done relatively quickly. Discretionary services were, however, valued by the community and defined the local authority;
- in the medium to long-term it would be possible to look at Shared Services, re-modelling of service provision and commissioning of services i.e. at lower costs; and
- to seek to increase income via fees and charges.

Dr Gooding added that strategically, and of considerable importance, was better use of the Council's assets. A Review was underway, the aim of which was to generate income and protect services. It was hoped that between £1 - £1.5 m per annum could be realised through better asset management. The Draft Asset Business Plan had been approved and adopted by the City Council on 11 January 2011.

The Assistant Director (Resources) reported that the Executive Budget Proposals issued for consultation were based upon detailed proposals which had been considered by the Executive over the course of the last few months.

The Council was facing many financial challenges over the next five-year planning period and forecast resources were not anticipated to cover the expenditure commitments without a major 'transformational' review of service provision.

The Assistant Director (Resources) then gave a presentation on the 2011/12 Budget.

He emphasised that this was the toughest budget he had known. The City Council had a good track record in terms of the achievement of efficiencies and could dip into its reserves in the short term when necessary. The principal issues were around the Comprehensive Spending Review; Pension Fund Revaluation; impact of the recession (fees and charges; and Treasury Management); and reduced level of capital resources which meant that the Capital Programme was unaffordable. The impact upon the Council was clearly evidenced in the revised reserves position after Government announcements as set out in his presentation.

The Assistant Director (Resources) then outlined in some detail the position with regard to the Revenue and Capital Budgets. Looking at the projected reserves position, it was clear that the Revenue Reserves would dip in 2012/13 before building up to a healthy position on 2015/16. £1.5m needed to be retained in reserve for emergencies.

In conclusion, the Assistant Director (Resources) advised that the Executive Budget Proposals were based upon Officers' advice and were open to consultation until 9.00 am on 19 January 2011, following which the Executive would consider consultation feedback prior to proposing its response to the budget consultation and recommendations for submission to the City Council on 1 February 2011.

Referring to the Executive's draft Budget Proposals, Councillor Holland stated that she found it extremely difficult to understand the implications thereof for Parish Councils. The draft Budget Proposals had been released on 22 December 2010 with a consultation response deadline of 19 January 2011. The timescale for responses was tight and few Parish Councils met within the specified period which was frustrating.

In response the Assistant Director (Resources) explained that the draft budget proposals would not affect Parish Councils during 2011/12. With regard to the Council's decision to amend the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to restrict discretionary rate relief to 80% of rates payable, for example, a year's notice would be given.

Councillor Holland questioned the impact with regard to footpaths for example.

The Chairman replied that the reduction in discretionary rate relief was the main issue which would affect the Parishes in the future. Consideration would be given to the development of new criteria under which future applications would be assessed.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) said that Officers would liaise with all Village Halls, Parish Councils and voluntary agencies to work out an effective mechanism for development of the process. One aspect of the criteria would be to encourage and support the good work currently undertaken by community organisations. He viewed the process as a new and positive way of working with Parishes.

Councillor Bloxham added that footpaths were a County Council function, from whom the City Council received a grant under claimed rights.

Councillor Mrs Geddes added that several meetings had recently taken place with community organisations and agencies, when favourable support had been received. Opportunities existed in addition to the proposed cuts.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive apologised for the relatively short budget consultation period, adding that some districts were not consulting on their budget proposals. Many of the issues outlined as part of the Assistant Director (Resources)' presentation were internal to the City Council e.g. reductions in staffing numbers and the need to protect services. The next and important stage in the process would be working together.

Councillor Auld expressed relief that there would be no effect upon Parish Councils in the coming year. He asked whether the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) would attend a future meeting of the CPCA Executive as part of the consultation.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) confirmed that he would very much like to do so.

Councillor Nicholson (Stanwix Rural Parish Council) sought clarification as to whether the reduction in discretionary rate relief would impact upon Village Halls.

In response, the Chairman outlined the background to the Council's decision on discretionary rate relief. He stressed that organisations would still be able to apply for rate relief under the criteria which were currently the subject of negotiation.

The Assistant Director (Resources) added that Village Halls would receive a year's notice.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

9. PARISH CHARTER REVIEW

Councillor Mrs Bowman (Rural Champion and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development) presented a report on the City Council's actions in monitoring the Parish Charter. She reminded Members that the Charter contained a series of commitments made by the City, Parishes and County Councils and she set out a table which outlined progress made by the City Council against the commitments contained within the Charter. The table indicated the actions which were either in place, in progress or to be initiated, and also highlighted the areas which had been identified as priority actions in January 2008.

Councillor Bowman added that Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) had also undertaken to monitor the implementation of the Parish Charter in terms of progress made against their respective commitments.

In terms of individual actions, Councillor Bowman reported that the City Council had made progress against their various commitments set out within the Charter, with the exception of the commitment to invite new Parish Clerks to attend one of their staff or member induction courses, where appropriate; and offer 'quality' Councils the opportunity to receive a level of IT service similar to that received by City Councillors, subject to terms being agreed.

She expressed some disappointment that an evaluation of actions taken by Parish Councils had yet to be received. She was, however, pleased to note the positive feedback received as part of the Parish Charter consultation questionnaire in respect of Carlisle and hoped that would continue.

In conclusion, Councillor Bowman said that the Localism Bill would have an impact upon the Parish Charter.

Councillor Auld thanked Councillor Bowman for her report and the work undertaken. He had spoken to CALC and everyone recognised that changes would take place, and were keen to address the concerns expressed.

Councillor Bowman then paid tribute to the work undertaken by Ms Hutchinson, Rural Support Officer. She added that Ms Hutchinson had achieved a great deal and it had been a joy to work with her.

Councillor Auld reiterated those sentiments referring to the valuable support he had received from the Rural Support Officers.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the City Council's performance against the commitments in the Charter be noted.

10. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) updated Parish Council representatives on Highway Maintenance under the 'Claimed Rights' Scheme, commenting that a bid would be submitted as was the norm. She added that an options appraisal on the future of claimed rights and to determine what represented best value for Carlisle would be undertaken.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

11. LOCALITY WORKING

Councillor Auld provided an update on progress with Locality Working, commenting that the focus over the last year had been around opportunities for joint working. He acknowledged that it could be difficult for some Parish Councils to see the benefits of working with a neighbouring Parish on a particular project. A report would be produced and presented in the Spring.

He also outlined work undertaken on Broadband, referring to the recent very successful Broadband Meets Localism Conference organised by the CPCA. The results of the broadband survey would be published on their website in the coming weeks. The Conference could also be viewed via YouTube and the News and Star Website.

In conclusion, Councillor Auld said that the CPCA was very anxious to ensure that locality working moved forward and asked that Parish Councils give the matter some thought.

RESOLVED – That the update be received.

12. OPEN QUESTIONS

No questions arose.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the dates of the meetings between the Executive and Parish Councils Association in 2011 be provisionally agreed as Monday 20 June 2011 (to be hosted by Carlisle Parish Councils Association) and Monday 21 November 2011 (to be hosted by the City Council).

(The meeting ended at 8.35 pm)