

**Community Overview  
& Scrutiny Panel**

**Economy &  
Environment Overview  
& Scrutiny Panel**

# Neighbourhood Working

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# Recommendations

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1. That the Council organise regular high level meetings of partners working within communities to discuss current and future projects and to explore how better to serve each other and the community.
2. That sufficient responsibility is delegated to staff working within localities to make budgetary and operational decisions within an agreed remit with the relevant senior officer.
3. That a project co-ordinator is appointed for time-limited projects. The Co-ordinator can be from any organisation involved in the project and would be the first point of contact.
- 4 That consideration is given to developing community websites and/or virtual public notice boards. Within this project a central point detailing all community activities should also be considered with appropriate links from the Council website.
- 5 That the Carlisle Focus magazine should be used to publicise activities held within communities and the Council should explore alternative media to publicise community activities and events.
- 6 That full contact lists are produced and kept up to date.
- 7 That referrals, complaints and compliments are collated to identify the areas and issues that are a concern to the public and that this information is used to prioritise the areas of work for the Authority and is also fed into the development of Community Plans. An annual report detailing this information and the outcomes should be presented to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Panel.
- 8 That broadening the remit of the Customer Contact Centre within the Civic Centre is investigated to include other partners, for example Cumbria County Council and Riverside.
- 9 That it is acknowledged that Community Led Plans are likely to be necessary in the future to access funding and to establish community priorities. Therefore the Executive need to consider how the Authority will support Communities in this area.
- 10 That consideration is therefore given, in consultation with Partners, to rolling out the Together We Can model to other communities in the District to produce, monitor and review the Community Plans. The model needs to be flexible to adapt to the different needs within communities and reflect financial restraint and will need to be supported by staff from partner organisations.

- 11 That consideration be give to establishing neighbourhood multi-agency teams to coordinate activities.
- 12 That the Council enter into talks with Cumbria County Council to explore sharing staff and resources in areas of Community Development, Engagement and Neighbourhood Working.
- 13 That the Council enter into talks with Riverside to explore sharing staff and resources in areas of Neighbourhood Working, Community Engagement and Development.
- 14 That the benefits for the community of Community Centres need to be maximised. Consideration should be given to using the Centres, and also appropriate points within rural areas, to be reporting points for the public.
- 15 That consideration is also given to investigate the provision of access by telephone and email to the Customer Contact Centre in Community Centres and an appropriate place in rural areas.
- 16 That if the terms of the subscription allow, Community Centre Managers and Parish Clerks are given access to the GRANTfinder database (or similar).

***The following additional recommendations were made by the Environment & Economy Sub-Group at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011***

17. That service requests, complaints and compliments are directed through a simplified system that will accommodate customer and member enquiries and assist the Council to deliver an efficient and effective service.
18. That the Council works with other partners to deliver creative ways of dealing with fly tipping, litter and other environmental problems on private land.
19. That the Council develops its approach to neighbourhood management (cleanliness, open space maintenance, highways, lighting etc.) working with key partners to make maximum use of our combined resources in specific target areas.

# Background to the Scrutiny

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- 1.1 Members of the Environment & Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel held a development session on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 to plan their work for the 2010/11 Civic Year. Various topics were suggested for potential areas for review and it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be appointed to undertake a review of Area Working. Initial volunteers to the group were Cllrs Rutherford, Robson (later to be replaced by Cllr Nedved) & Vasey and an invitation to join the group was extended to other backbench Members. Cllr Michael Clarke volunteered and subsequently joined the Task Group.
- 1.2 Parallel to this the Members of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel were determining their Work Programme for the year ahead. It was suggested to the Panel to undertake a joint review which could then cover both Environmental and Community issues.
- 1.3 The Panel appointed Councillors Clarke, Bradley and Cape to the Task Group. Councillor Bradley was selected to Chair the Group at the initial meeting of the full group on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010.
- 1.4 The Terms of Reference for the scrutiny were agreed as:

**Overall Aim:**

To undertake an exploration of neighbourhood based activities and make recommendations to the Authority's Executive in order to ensure that the services offered are meeting the needs and aspirations of communities and are maximising the impact of available resources.

**Methodology:**

The Task Group will split into two sub-groups – Environment & Community – to investigate issues relevant to those service areas. Full methodology and priorities will be determined at the first meeting of each of the sub-groups. The sub-groups will join up where appropriate throughout the scrutiny and produce a joint report and recommendations at the end of the review.

All Task Group Members will be invited to all sub-group meetings.

**Reporting**

A joint report on the scrutiny review of the task and finish group will then form the basis for recommendations to the Executive which will be approved by the Community O&S Panel and the Environment & Economy O&S Panel.

**Timescale**

The group aim to produce a draft report with recommendations by February 2011.

*Due to the timing of the Workshop the timescale for the Review slipped by approximately one month.*

# Methodology

Date	Present	Purpose
7th September 2010	Task Group Members Strategic Director Assistant Directors – Community Engagement & Environment	To appoint Lead Member Consideration of background information Draft Terms of Reference and methodology for review
22nd September 2010	Community Sub-Group Members Strategic Director	To determine further information the Task Group require
27th September 2010	Environment Sub-Group Members Strategic Director Assistant Director, Environment	To determine further information the Task Group require
28th September 2010	Questionnaire sent to all Members and Parish Council Clerks	
12th October 2010	Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel	Special meeting of Panel to look at the Harraby and Longtown Together We Can pilots
2nd November 2010	Community Sub-Group Portfolio Holder, Governance and Resources Strategic Director Assistant Director, Community Engagement	Evidence gathering session Information from AD Information from questionnaires
4th November 2010	Environment Sub-Group Strategic Director Assistant Director, Environment Neighbourhoods & Green Spaces Manager	Evidence gathering session Information from AD Information from questionnaires
24th January 2011	Task Group Members Representatives from Partner agencies	Workshop for Partners
22nd February 2011	Task Group Members Strategic Director Area Manager, Cumbria County Council	To determine next steps  To be informed of findings of County Council Task Group
28 <sup>th</sup> February 2011	Task Group Chair Scrutiny Officer	Drafting report
3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2011	Task Group Members Scrutiny Officer	Drafting report and recommendations
24 <sup>th</sup> March 2011	Draft report to Community O&S Panel for agreement	
7 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	Draft report to Economy & Environment Panel for agreement	

# Findings

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## COMMUNITY SUB-GROUP

### 1 Questionnaire

- 1.1 Members of the Community Sub-Group decided that their first task was to gain a general idea of the current activities being provided within neighbourhoods. They also wanted a view on the range of partnership activities and to begin to look at where there are gaps in provision.
- 1.2 A questionnaire was therefore developed by the Members of the Community Sub-Group which was sent out to all City Councillors (52) and all Parish Clerks (32).
- 1.3 A letter was also sent to all Community Centres to ask for a list of timetable of activities held in the Centres.
- 1.4 A copy of the Questionnaire can be found at Appendix 1.
- 1.5 Responses were received which represented 12 wards (55%) and 13 Parishes (41%).

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Parish</b>
Botcherby	Arthuret
Currock	Beaumont
Dalston	Castle Carrock & Geltside
Harraby	Kirkandrews on Esk
Irthing	Orton
Morton	Nether Denton
St Aidan's	Rockcliffe
Stanwix Rural	St Cuthberts without
Stanwix Urban	Stanwix Rural
Upperby	Upper Denton
Yewdale	Walton
	Waterhead
	Wetheral

- 1.6 Respondents indicated that community centres and village halls were the main focus of community activity in their area. Schools and churches were also identified as establishments which held community events.
- 1.7 Members and Parish Clerks identified a great range of community activities held within their wards and parishes and a full mapping of these responses can be found at Appendix 2. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of all community activities, just those identified by respondents and those available (at that point in time) within Community Centres.

- 1.8 At the time of the questionnaire all Community Centres within the city along with Longtown and Brampton held sessions for pre-school children, from Parent and Toddler Sessions through to Pre-school Groups. Within the rural areas only 5 of the 14 respondents indicated that pre-school activities were available within their parish.
- 1.9 With regard to school age children, again all Community Centres in the Carlisle District run a wide ranging programme including Brownies, Scouts, football, breakfast clubs, boxing skills and dancing. 7 of the 11 Community Centres run Youth Clubs. Again, less provision was identified in rural areas with only 3 respondents indicating that there was some provision for school age children within their area.
- 1.10 The Task Group were pleasantly surprised at the range and provision of activities and specialist groups for adults within the district. Zumba, Pensioners Clubs, Slimming Clubs, various Health sessions, Table Tennis, Woodwork and Knitting are just a fraction of activities currently available within localities.
- 1.11 The questionnaire asked in the opinion of the respondents, what gaps there were in the provision of activities within the community.
- 1.12 Several parishes identified Youth clubs, sports and Keep Fit activities. Furthermore Wetheral Parish Council has undertaken a Community Plan Survey which identified a need for activities for the 12-18 age groups in their area.
- 1.13 With regard to Member responses, there was no clear overall gap in provision identified. However some gaps were acknowledged which could be fulfilled by provision in neighbouring areas. For example Members in Currock recognised a need for activities for older people and the nearby Petheril Bank run Old Time Dancing and Bingo sessions. Although it is acknowledged that transport may be an issue Members agreed that **a central point detailing all community activities would be useful.**
- 1.14 Within the responses various examples were provided of effective and successful partnership working. The rural areas in particular acknowledged the valued contribution of the Police who worked with youths in the areas and also their working with Parish Council on reducing speeding and the provision of Neighbourhood Watch schemes.
- 1.15 In urban areas again the Community Police and also Riverside were singled out as examples of good partners within neighbourhoods. An example was given from Upperby, where in 2009 the Police organised a football competition for local young people at Hammonds Pond during the Summer Holidays. The Harraby and Longtown Together We Can pilots were also singled out as excellent models of how partnership working and engagement with the community can have real outputs. (Further information on these pilots can be found at Pages 12-15.
- 1.16 Respondents were also asked if they thought that Partnership working in the provision of activities could be improved. There was no overall consensus to the responses but improved communication between partners and with the public was acknowledged as key to good working relationships.
- 1.17 In considering the provision of activities Members of the Task Group looked at the Websites for Community Centres within the Carlisle district. Currently each Centre has an website in the exact same format as the others and Members of the Group found that



these were fairly old fashioned and cumbersome. Again Members noted that they would like to see some sort of **website for the Community or a Public Virtual Notice Board**. Members agreed that an exercise such as this need not be too expensive if the community were asked to be involved in such a project – for example using Graphic Design students. However Members are also mindful of the number of people within the community, particularly older people, who do not have access to the internet.

**Consideration therefore needs to be given how community activities and events are publicised.** A suggestion was that use could be made of the Carlisle Focus magazine and Parish Newsletters and community centres/parish centres could also hold lists of activities available in other wards and parishes.

- 1.18 Members were also mindful of the impending opening of Carlisle Youth Zone (CYZ) in April 2011 and wished to know how the Zone would work alongside the existing provision with the district. The Chairman and Chief Executive of CYZ were therefore invited to meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011 as the panel had expressed an interest in finding out more information about the Zone and Members of the Task Group could use this session as an opportunity to gather further evidence for their scrutiny.
- 1.19 At the meeting, Members were assured that CYZ would undertake work on their timetable of activities to avoid clashes with other organisations that already existed in the area. The Zone would provide an opportunity for local clubs and organisations to hold “taster” sessions in the building and CYZ could also signpost to local clubs and events.
- 1.20 It was the intention of CYZ to raise awareness of the activities and clubs being held throughout the communities and feed into them.
- 1.21 Members were also concerned about transport issues particularly with regard to the rural areas and were assured that CYZ would be working in Partnership with local transport providers to cover the area. A minibus owned by CYZ would be used to fill any gaps in the transport links.
- 1.22 Members of the sub-Group were mindful of the reduction in grants to Community Centres from 2011/12 and agreed that **access to GRANTfinder (a grants and policy database) should be extended to Community Centre Managers and also to Parish Clerks**. Members were informed during the scrutiny of the changes to support to Community Centres following Transformation of the Community Engagement Directorate and would expect that the appointed Development Officers would assist Community Centres in the securing grants and external funding. Members of the Task Group agreed that the Authority needed to move from a provider to enabler model.

## 2 Together We Can Pilots

*Together we can is a pilot project that empowers local residents to influence the issues that affect them in their locality. To date the project has involved many local organisations, all of whom came together to try and make a positive difference in local communities. Organisations taking part include district councils, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service, the NHS, the Police and community and voluntary organisations.*

*Together we can coordinates local delivery from public service providers and partners into a focussed time period to increase visibility. This is also done under one logo – ‘together we can’, rather than many.<sup>1</sup>*

- 2.1 In 2009, the City Council, in association with other partners, including the County Council, Riverside and the Police, Fire and rescue Service, Parish Councils, the PCT and community organisations, agreed to take two “empowerment” pilot projects with a view to testing whether locality based approaches could address community issues more effectively and to provide opportunities for local people to develop the skills, knowledge and interest to empower them to be more involved in making decisions about their neighbourhoods.
- 2.2 The two areas selected were Longtown (and hinterland) and a locally defined area of Harraby.
- 2.3 Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held a special meeting at the Harraby Community Centre on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to look at the progress of the two pilots, the lessons learned and for the Task Group to look at whether the process might be rolled out across other areas of the city.
- 2.4 The meeting was extremely well attended by residents, stakeholders, and officers along with Ward Councillors and relevant City Council Portfolio Holders. Community activists who have been involved in both pilots attended the meeting and Members were encouraged to invite their views, which added important perspectives about what empowerment has meant to them and their communities.
- 2.5 The objectives of the projects were as follows:
  1. For the local authorities and their partners to get closer to the needs of their communities and particularly those potentially vulnerable
  2. To inform, consult and involve the community in the design and delivery of services
  3. To develop Neighbourhood Management or Locality Working as a means of involving communities
  4. To explore potential areas for participatory budgeting
  5. To improve effectiveness and therefore satisfaction with local services
  6. To prepare CAA and particularly to support the Cumbria Local Area Agreement

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.togetherwecan.org.uk/>

7. To bring neighbourhood planning closer to the corporate and community planning or local providers and partnerships
8. For local councillors to develop their role as community leaders
9. To develop community led planning as a means of involving communities
10. To enhance the role of quality parish councils

2.6 Members were made aware that it was apparent early on in the process that the two pilots would take very different paths towards achieving their aims.

### 3 Longtown

3.1 Members were informed that the pilot in Longtown focussed on the opportunities for principal authorities and service delivery agents working more closely with rural communities building upon the Community Led Planning process that has been in place for the past decade.

3.2 The Carlisle Parish Councils' Association (CPCA) and Carlisle Partnership have used the information from community led planning to develop a model for issues based locality working and informing the revised Carlisle Partnership Community Plan.

3.3 The rural pilot group was led at an officer level by the Carlisle City Council's Policy and Performance Team working with the Rural Support Team and in partnership with the County's Neighbourhood Development Officer and the Carlisle Development Officer from Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT).

3.4 City and County Councillors were involved in early discussions with the parishes in setting the parameters of the pilots. Early discussions with the parishes made it clear that that the project should build upon the current activity already underway in the area. Community Led Planning (CLP) in the Longtown area was to be key building block for the pilot project.

3.5 A partnership networking group meets regularly involving organisations that deliver services in the Longtown Area. Including representatives from the Children's Centre/Barnardos, Riverside, Health Centre, Longtown Community Centre, Parish Council, Police, Neighbourhood Development Officer (County Council), Rural Support Officer (City Council) and Tullie House. The partnership network provided support to the local community planning group.

#### Community Led Planning

Community Led Planning, previously known as Parish Planning, is a step-by-step process that takes place within a local neighbourhood or Parish and is led by local people.

It helps the community to decide on local social, economic, environmental and cultural priorities and take responsibility for making things happen locally, rather than expecting other to do it for them.

This approach to empowerment has been developed and implemented in rural areas over many years, largely as a response to the gradual withdrawal of public services and the increasing self-reliance of communities in looking after their own affairs.

More information on CLP can be found at Appendix 3

- 3.6 Where appropriate local authority officers were invited to provide guidance in forming the plans including the Green Spaces Team, Carlisle Partnership Manager and Economic Development Manager. Other partners that worked closely with the groups were the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust, Groundwork, Barnardos and Riverside.
- 3.7 The CLPs were funded by grant from ACT, the Neighbourhood Forum and the Longtown Market Town Initiative (MTI).
- 3.8 Members were informed that in order to engage with the Community it was agreed that open days, focus groups were arranged as well as events for local businesses. Over 1600 responses were received and the issues were gathered and then prioritised then placed into a framework for action. The drop-in sessions were well advertised throughout the community and voluntary groups were also used to access other areas. Primary schools in the area were also visited by the Parish Clerk and Clerk and every child had prepared a drawing of their opinion of the good and bad parts of Longtown. Young people in the area were also engaged through other forums such as Young Farmers.
- 3.9 Members were informed of the support to the project given by City Council Officers, and it was apparent that this support was valued and more importantly essential for the success of the programme.
- 3.10 Most importantly the community felt listened to and appropriate actions taken.

## 4 Harraby

- 4.1 With regard to the Harraby area, Members were informed that the area was selected as one of the pilot areas, largely because of the impending closure the local secondary school (NCTC) but which, for the past two years, has been the interim site for the Richard Rose Central Academy.
- 4.2 It was acknowledged that the closure of the school would have significant social and economic impacts on the area and the pilot offered an opportunity test the theory of empowerment in a real situation.
- 4.3 The evaluations will show whether or not that ambition has been realised, but it is evident, even without the benefit of considered analysis, that significant and positive changes have occurred in the way that the community engages with local Councillors and agency staff in making decisions about what issues are tackled in the area.
- 4.4 One of the most telling signs of the fact that the pilot has had real impact lies in the fact that of the 30/40 core group of residents who started off as 'key community stakeholders' in 2009, have remained involved in the process and have undertaken a variety of training, learning and information experiences, including Participatory Budgeting
- 4.5 The local Councillors have bought in to the concept of the pilot and have been willing to share power in terms of involving residents in making key decisions about some key issues, including using the lessons learnt on the PB course, to identify spending on local

projects. They have maintained an interest through attending stakeholder group meetings and expanding the agendas of Neighbourhood Forum meetings to include discussion on the progress of the scheme.

- 4.6 Members were shown a short DVD which had been prepared for distribution in the Harraby Ward to encourage more participation in the TWC project.
- 4.7 It was evident to Members the success of the pilot and the enthusiasm of the community members and stakeholders involved. Members were informed that the partners took the “you said we did” approach and listened to the group and tried to achieve what they wanted. The initial list of issues from the group had been physical issues such as graffiti on roads and now all of the physical issues had been dealt with, the list was all about community events and community delivery.
- 4.8 A resident of the community explained to Members the same residents were part of a Parent Group which consulted with children e.g. Brownie and football groups. An example of the consultation has been the location of the new park which had been chosen by the children.
- 4.9 Members of the Residents Stakeholder Group had attended training sessions on Participatory Budgeting which helped them understand how to make decisions on spending.
- 4.10 Members were informed that one issue which had caused some friction was that part of the Harraby community area fell into the Botcherby Ward and at times this had caused a divide in the group.
- 4.11 At the conclusion of the meeting the Panel resolved:
- That the Stakeholders, Residents and Officers be thanked for their valuable contribution to the meeting;
  - That a future session be held in a rural parish;
  - That the comments, questions and input from the Longtown Together We Can Group and the Harraby Together We Can Group be referred to the Locality Working Task and Finish Group.

(Summary reports from the meeting can be provided on request and are available on the City Council website under Committee Meetings)

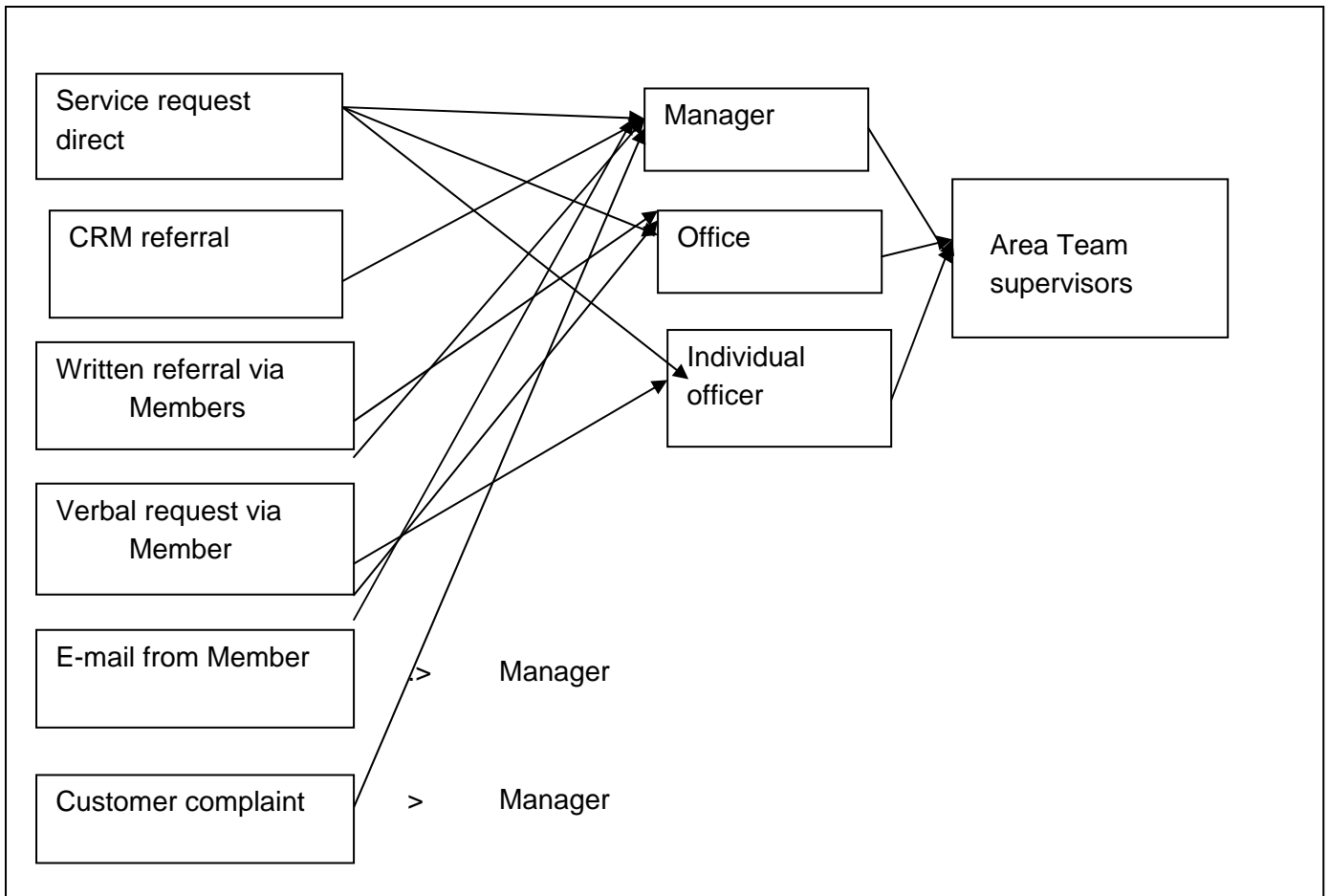
## 5 Update on County Council Task Group on Locality Working

- 5.1 The Task Group met with the County Council's Area Support Manager for Carlisle on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2011 to be updated on the work of the Carlisle Local Area Committee's Locality Working Task and Finish Group.
- 5.2 The County Council's Task Group undertook a review of the geographic working and a review of the Community Engagement work. The Task Group are recommending a revised geographic area for locality working suggesting 5 urban areas and 3 rural.
- 5.3 Members were informed that each of the urban areas covered an average population of 14,000 and the rural areas covered an average of 10,000. The urban areas were broadly split by railways or rivers and it was felt that the size of the areas were manageable and could be revisited if necessary as the population changed.
- 5.4 With regard to community engagement, Members were informed that the locality working would focus on projects that were there for the future of local communities and not just to satisfy the current needs of the communities. It was therefore proposed by the County Council's Task Group that 8 locality groups would allow for tangible plans that could be delivered.
- 5.5 Although Carlisle was advanced in working with neighbourhoods the Local Area Committee were keen to make the work better in the future and support communities whilst still carrying out their day job.
- 5.6 At the time of writing the report was due to be considered by the Local Area Committee.
- 5.7 Members were informed that community groups would be able to apply for non statutory funding alongside the grants from local authorities. Governance arrangements were therefore important and it was also essential that all Members are involved in the setting the priorities with the communities. If a community had a plan and there was funding available there needed to be an easier way to access the money and move forward with the project.
- 5.8 Members were reassured that all the communities within each locality would have an equal opportunity to develop projects. Key areas for each locality would be identified and an action plan would be produced to deliver projects to meet the required outcomes. The move to eight localities meant improved neighbourhood management and would give an opportunity to share resources with partners to support the localities. It was also hoped that the localities would encourage greater opportunity for devolving power down to the local communities. The work within each of the locality would be very flexible and would deal with projects or events on an issue basis.

## ENVIRONMENT SUB-GROUP

### 6 Area Working - Environment

- 6.1 Members of the Environment sub-group requested a current position statement with regard to Area Working.
- 6.2 They were informed that the current Area Working operation was initiated in 2004 after a previous re-organisation of Council departments. The aim was to create a number of teams who would be responsible for specific 'areas' of the city and district, 5 in all (East, West, North, Central and Rural). Within each team would be the skills to tackle a full range of maintenance issues, including highways, grounds and street cleaning. 8 members of staff from each of Grounds Maintenance and Highway Maintenance were transferred into the new area teams to join the street cleansing operatives.
- 6.3 The 4 areas within the urban area are divided along ward boundaries creating roughly equal division of the work. Each area has a supervisor to organise, allocate and monitor the work and look after the team. The primary responsibilities are:
- Street cleansing
  - Fly-tipping removal
  - Shrub pruning
  - Strimming and weeding
  - Highway inspections and small repairs
- 6.4 Members were told that at the current time there were various pathways by which service requests come in to the team and how they are processed and closed. The system is over-complicated and needs to be simplified for greater effect. (See diagram 1 overleaf)
- 6.5 Member workshops, held in April 2010, identified the cleanliness and presentability of the street scene and public realm as a high priority for action. Members were generally supportive of the area based approach and were keen to see improvement. This represents an opportunity – when resources are being allocated according to priorities it follows that area maintenance should be recognised as requiring the resources in order to get the job done.
- 6.6 A major issue currently facing the service is that of opportunity cost. Members were informed that the team is often deployed to collect fly-tipped refuse from locations that are not the City Council's responsibility. Landlords are unwilling to accept responsibility for fly-tip and by default the job of clearing it ends up with the Area Maintenance team
- 6.7 The effectiveness of the service could be improved by a creative approach to the issues. For example, pro-active community initiatives to reduce the levels and distribution of litter and fly-tipping, or investment in design of systems of work including new technology to allocate resources for maximum impact. While there has been some attempt at partnership working this needs to be given more impetus in order that the benefits are maximised.



**Diagram 1 - Work Flow chart – Area Maintenance and Green Spaces teams**

6.8 Capital replacement has become an issue, with a number of mechanical sweepers reaching the limits of their life expectancy and resources being scarce. However, there are other sources of capital outside the Council that may provide some dividends. One example is the Section 106 developer contributions that have been successfully applied to the development of public open space and children’s play areas across Carlisle. It may be possible to use this type of funding to provide new machinery.

6.9 Members of the Environment sub-Group requested that a question be added to the questionnaire sent out by the community Sub-Group:

*The Task Group is interested to find out Members experiences reporting problems relating to environmental issues (eg, cleaning, fly tipping, roads etc). Please give details of any problems that you have with regard to reporting issues and suggestions on how this could be improved.*

6.10 Responses in general indicated that as long as the problem was reported to the correct officer then action was usually forthcoming, however the response could be varied dependent on the Department responsible. It is clear from the responses that concerns and requests are not dealt with in a uniform way with clear procedures. Therefore there is no way that the Authority is able to collate information and track requests and/or concerns.



- 6.11 The “impasse” between the County and City Council with regard to highways was highlighted as a frustration by several respondents with some confusion around which agency is responsible for which highway. The accessibility of the two Authorities websites with regard to the responsible Highway authority was also seen as a means of frustration.
- 6.12 One Member responded with information about the IT System used by Councillors at Blackpool Council. Members are instructed to email requests and then are then able to track their request from their PC.

## 7 Workshop for Partners

- 7.1 Both sub –groups identified early on in their review that successful working with partners was key to the provision of neighbourhood working. It was therefore agreed that a workshop would be arranged to which representatives from partner organisations would be invited. The purpose of the workshop was to look at the current position of neighbourhood working, what is successful and what can be improved.
- 7.2 21 officers attended the workshop which was run on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011. A full list of delegates can be found at Appendix 5. The Task group agreed a list of questions which would be used to structure the discussion and were circulated to participants in advance so that they could undertake any necessary preparation. The questions covered four themes:
- Current working practices
  - Working together
  - Working with communities
  - Improved working relationships
- 7.3 Task Group Members agreed that they wished an officer to facilitate the session that was not involved in the direct delivery of services and asked Mark Lambert, Assistant Director, Governance to undertake this role.
- 7.4 Participants were asked to give examples of current working practices of partnership within neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood Forums were highlighted as a catalyst to bring partners and communities together in both rural and urban areas. However it was argued that these people in the community that may need services aren't usually the ones who attend the meeting. The Fire Service for example acknowledged that getting to hard to reach groups was required.
- Participants gave examples of good partnership working on specific projects and for events, for example Bonfire Night but *“what is missing is a combined neighbourhood response, priorities management on a neighbourhood basis”*. At the moment *“Action is brief, short term and well organised”*.
- 7.5 With regard to co-ordination it was apparent that there were no formal mechanisms for co-ordinating partners, although at local level partnership working works very well. Participants agreed that the gaps are at the higher end and *“Senior Managers need to come together to work more efficiently in future years”*.
- 7.6 Representatives from Riverside informed the workshop of how Riverside carried out status surveys in Harraby asking residents to highlight what they did not like about their area. The main issue was enviro-crime. The team in Botcherby area cleaning streets and picking up fly-tipping. Tools are available for residents to borrow to tidy up their gardens and in some cases the garden would be tidied up and the resident charged. Once the garden was tidy it would be the resident's responsibility to keep it tidy. In general there had been some good feedback.

- 7.7 The Parish Councils were identified as having an advantage over urban areas as there is usually a more defined neighbourhood grouping and also the advantage of access to a Parish budget to run projects.
- 7.8 Participants identified that a single point of contact was useful for communities to receive seamless services. The Customer Services Manager from Carlisle City Council informed the group that the Customer Contact Centre in the Civic Centre works with third parties including the Police and Adult Social Care but does not work well with services not in the Civic Centre and staff have no knowledge of the service eg highways.
- 7.9 The Together We Can pilots detailed earlier in this report were highlighted as excellent examples of partners working in and with communities: *“there were lots of events and galas that did not cost a lot of money”*.
- 7.10 Participants were asked about where organisations do not work together and a member of the Task Group highlighted patch walks as an area whereby the Council and Riverside could work together more effectively and co-ordinated.
- 7.11 With regard to working with communities Members of the Task Group were given some excellent examples. Riverside carry out a status survey every 2 years, send out newsletters highlighting initiatives, undertake door knocking, have tenants and residents groups and also send representatives to the neighbourhood forums. Officers from the City Council attend neighbourhood forums. The Police hold Safer, Stronger meetings monthly in each neighbourhood and mobile Police stations are taken to neighbourhoods. The Police ask for the priorities in each area then the neighbourhood Police team prioritise the work for the next 3 months.
- 7.12 Age Concern provide information at day centres and doctors’ surgeries and Councillors attend the lunch clubs held for older people who may not want to attend a night time Councillor surgery.
- 7.13 Participants discussed the Localism Bill and Big Society. It was highlighted that one of the central issues of the Localism Bill is that neighbourhoods will not be able to take advantage of funding unless they have a community plan. How will that be taken forward in urban areas? The rural areas have plans and Parishes have procedures and models.
- 7.14 Task Group Members were informed that *“the Big Society is nothing new, it has been done in Cumbria for over 10 years”*. The key role is for the public sector is what we want to achieve. There is a concern that the Big Society is being heralded as the way to do things in spite of communities rather than working with communities. A community plan and what the community wants to deliver is the way forward and Officers would want to support communities.
- 7.15 Members were informed that partners have to look at how to move to a more managed approach with an action plan and do more work with Parishes. The Big Society needs to be included in action plans. Are volunteers available? Within any action plan there should be something that would indicate what communities could do for themselves. A major gap is how to persuade individual organisations to make savings for other organisations.

7.16 Budgets were discussed and it was suggested that decision making and budgets should be devolved to allow small budget funds. Communities would need to be clear what services should be delivered and would need to know what to expect from partners.

*“Communities are better than Wards. We need to ask the communities what they want”*

# Conclusions

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## 1 Partnership Working

- 1.1 Members agreed that the workshop highlighted that there was a need for improved partnership working. Around the District there are some excellent examples where front-line officers work together for and within the community but it was evident that there was a need for a better understanding and involvement at a higher level.
- 1.2 Members were concerned that officers were often not empowered to make decisions on an operational and budgetary level. It is not always necessary to have senior officers involved and therefore officers actually undertaking the work should be given sufficient power delegated to them.
- 1.3 The workshop for Partners also highlighted to Members that on specific time-limited projects co-ordination is generally good. However this tended to be due to the calibre of officers rather than having adequate procedures. Members therefore agreed that they would be making a recommendation regarding the appointment of project co-ordinators.

### ***Recommendations:***

- 1. That the Council organise regular high level meetings of partners working within communities to discuss current and future projects and to explore how better to serve each other and the community.***
- 2. That sufficient responsibility is delegated to staff working within localities to make budgetary and operational decisions within an agreed remit with the relevant senior officer.***
- 3. That a project co-ordinator is appointed for time-limited projects. The Co-ordinator can be from any organisation involved in the project and would be the first point of contact.***

## 2 Information

- 2.1 With regard for information for the public Members of the Task Group agreed that the Community Centre websites were old fashioned and cumbersome. Members agreed that they would prefer to see a website for the Community or a Public Virtual Notice Board. However Members are also mindful of the number of people within the community, particularly older people, who do not have access to the internet.
- 2.2 Members agreed that some identified gaps in provision could be fulfilled within a neighbouring community.

- 2.3 Members of the Task Group found that organisations should share the information that they have as this should help to identify neighbourhood priorities. Organisations should also keep contact details up to date to enable partners to communicate effectively with the appropriate people. At this time of change all partners need to ensure that there is a continuity of contact if a member of staff leaves the organisation.
- 2.4 Members agreed that contacts lists are essential for more effective partnership working and should therefore be shared and circulated.
- 2.5 Members were supportive of the proposal to limit the reporting points with regard to environmental issues. It was agreed that they would like to see this information collated to determine what and where the problems lies in order to help prioritise the work of the Authority and its partners and also to feed into the development of Community Plans.
- 2.6 Members of the Task Group agreed that it would be ideal to have a “One Stop Shop” in Carlisle. The City Council and the Police are working together within the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre and the Task Group would like to see this extended further.

#### ***Recommendations***

- 4 That consideration is given to developing community websites and/or virtual public notice boards. Within this project a central point detailing all community activities should also be considered with appropriate links from the Council website.***
- 5 That the Carlisle Focus magazine should be used to publicise activities held within communities and the Council should explore alternative media to publicise community activities and events.***
- 6 That full contact lists are produced and kept up to date.***
- 7 That referrals, complaints and compliments are collated to identify the areas and issues that are a concern to the public and that this information is used to prioritise the areas of work for the Authority and is also fed into the development of Community Plans. An annual report detailing this information and the outcomes should be presented to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Panel.***
- 8 That broadening the remit of the Customer Contact Centre within the Civic Centre is investigated to include other partners, for example Cumbria County Council and Riverside.***

### 3 Communities

- 3.1 It has become evident to Members of the Task Group that Community boundaries do not necessarily coincide with ward boundaries. This can be seen in both the responses to the questionnaires and also the Together We Can pilots.
- 3.2 The TWC pilots also highlighted that developing and empowering communities requires staff time and financial resources.
- 3.3 Members were however extremely impressed with the Together We Can pilots, both Longtown and Harraby and would like to see this model rolled out to other areas. Members acknowledge that the projects took different paths to achieve the same aim.
- 3.4 Members were informed throughout this review of the importance of community plans. This will become more evident in the future whereby Community Plans will be necessary to access funding.
- 3.5 In consultation with communities, partners should help draw up community plans. These can then be prioritised and addressed. This in turn can lead to a feeling of empowerment and be seen as a response to consultation.
- 3.6 Prioritised projects need all partners to agree and appoint co-ordinator from whichever partner is appropriate

#### ***Recommendations***

- 9 That it is acknowledged that Community Led Plans are likely to be necessary in the future to access funding and to establish community priorities. Therefore the Executive need to consider how the Authority will support Communities in this area.***
- 10 That consideration is therefore given, in consultation with Partners, to rolling out the Together We Can model to other communities in the District to produce, monitor and review the Community Plans. The model needs to be flexible to adapt to the different needs within communities and reflect financial restraint and will need to be supported by staff from partner organisations.***
- 11 That consideration be give to establishing neighbourhood multi-agency teams to coordinate activities.***

## 4 Sharing Resources

- 4.1 Members of the Task Group agreed that in order for partnership working to be effective and maximise use of resources, sharing staff and resources is essential. The current ongoing work of the County Council highlighted to Members that both Authorities were working towards a common goal and with the potential changes to Localities gives the ideal time to address this.
- 4.2 Members were also impressed by the work undertaken by Riverside in community engagement and development and improving the environment and agreed that there should be further consideration of sharing resources between Riverside and the City Council.
- 4.3 Discussions at the Workshop for Partners highlighted to Members of the Task Group that it is possible for one partner to act in such a way that another agency's resources are saved. Therefore this reinforces Members views that staff engaged in projects identified within a Community Plan need to be empowered to act and make decisions without having to refer back to the centre. (See recommendation 1 above)

### ***Recommendations***

- 12** *That the Council enter into talks with Cumbria County Council to explore sharing staff and resources in areas of Community Development, Engagement and Neighbourhood Working.*
- 13** *That the Council enter into talks with Riverside to explore sharing staff and resources in areas of Neighbourhood Working, Community Engagement and Development.*

## 5 Community Centres

- 5.1 Throughout the review both Community Centres and Village Halls have been highlighted as hubs of the community.
- 5.2 Members of the Task Group believe that Community Centres could be better used to collect and provide information and as a contact point for local people. Previous suggestions have included using the centres as reporting points. This would enable local people to have easier access to the Council, rather than visiting the contact centre at the Civic Centre.
- 5.3 The possibility of providing community centres (and an appropriate point in rural areas) with phone and email contact with the contact centre.
- 5.4 Members of the Task Group believed that access to the GRANTfinder Database (or similar) would be extremely beneficial for Community Centre Managers and Parish Clerks.



### **Recommendations**

- 14 That the benefits for the community of Community Centres need to be maximised. Consideration should be given to using the Centres, and also appropriate points within rural areas, to be reporting points for the public.**
- 15 That consideration is also given to investigate the provision of access by telephone and email to the Customer Contact Centre in Community Centres and an appropriate place in rural areas.**
- 16 That if the terms of the subscription allow, Community Centre Managers and Parish Clerks are given access to the GRANTfinder database (or similar).**

## **6 Plugging the gaps**

- 6.1 Serious consideration should be giving to plugging the gaps in provision as revealed in the member ward surveys. This can probably only be done through partnership working. Resources should be directed to those areas where a need has been identified.