



Meeting Date: 3 January 2023

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **People Panel Chair's Report – Councillor Colin Glover**

The November meeting of the People Scrutiny Panel received a number of useful updates and reports and were able to consider various issues and make recommendations:

Community Centre Sustainability – Current and post LGR

Community Centres are recognised as being key to supporting the delivery of the Council's health and wellbeing outcomes. Centres operate as independent organisations with their own Boards of Trustees and have received financial and other practical support for many years and the Council is landlord to the many of the Centres. Community Centres are keen to engage with the new Cumberland Council, to build on outcomes achieved and ensure continued delivery of valuable work to support the good physical and mental health & wellbeing of local people. Centres are naturally concerned about the impact of change, but Panel members were advised that the recurring Community Centre budget in the Council's MTFP will transfer to Cumberland Council and future funding will need to be considered as part of budget setting for the new Council.

A number of Centres have less than four years to run on their leases and this creates particular difficulties when applying for charitable capital grants to improve facilities, as grant providers often require at least 10 or 15 years remaining on leases before they will consider offering grant assistance. Panel members were particularly concerned about this and have asked the Executive to look at progressing these leases which have less than 25 years to run.

The Panel placed on record our thanks to Community Centres for the dedication and hard work that they do to deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes for local people in our communities.

Youth Projects and Engagement

The Panel received a valuable presentation on how the Council is working to engage and inspire young people to be involved in Civic and community life in the city. The work has included cultural and arts projects, environmental and nature projects including 'Big Buzz'

and school planting, Civic and Mayoral events, physical activity and a range of other engagement and volunteering activities.

It was noted that it is important to engage with young people before the age of fourteen, to give them a sense of belonging and community and to involve them in shaping significant longer-term projects that will affect their future lives such as St Cuthberts Garden Village, re-imagining the city centre and encouraging involvement in Civic life and volunteering.

Members welcomed the work that is taking place and look forward to building on the work with young people into the future.

Sickness absence Quarter 2, 2022/23

The Panel received an update on sickness absence and noted the improvement on the equivalent period for the previous year. Members considered muscular skeletal conditions and whilst these are not always work-related issues, members received assurances that work-related incidents are followed up and discussed with trade unions at the 6-weekly meeting to ensure that timely investment in equipment and training takes place to minimise risk to staff, particularly those with heavy manual roles.

Revenue and Capital Budget Overview and Monitoring – April to September 2022

Members received reports on revenue and capital budget provisions for the first two quarters of 2022/23. The impact of increased energy costs was explored and whilst budgets included increases for gas (30%) and electricity (25%) had been included and so far, there are no major variances, the situation is being closely monitored.

An update on the capital programme advised that a review of the 2022/23 capital programme will take place to establish the current profile of each project and inform the future planning for Cumberland Council's capital programme, including the City Council's contribution to the Southern Link Road.

Members again raised concerns on the underspends in the Sustainable Warmth Grants and Disabled Facility Grant budget but were advised that interventions are being put in place to address challenges, and members asked for a further update regarding reasons for the underspends and the arrangements to address challenges experienced.

Quarter 2 Performance Report 2022/23

The report included an update on delivery against the Carlisle Plan and noted that the main infrastructure work on the new Sands Centre facility is complete and has been handed over to GLL to re-open and operate services.

The Centre is now open and being actively used and I would like to congratulate all our staff, contractors and partners for delivering on the Council's vision for state-of-the-art leisure facilities, fit for a modern and growing city. This is a tremendous achievement, and everyone involved should rightly be proud of their contributions to make this happen.

Overview Report

There are a number of items that are still outstanding from previous meetings, in particular, requests for information with regard to the costs and impact of mothballing the Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths. The report presented to a previous Executive meeting made no reference to necessary conservation work to protect the listed building during closure. The building is due to be handed over to Cumbria County Council in preparation for the demolition of the 1970s pools as part of the Borderlands Station Gateway project. It is a matter of great concern that protection of a closed listed building does not seem to have been appropriately addressed, particularly with the prospect of demolition work taking place on the adjacent site. A further update on actions has been requested to a future meeting of the Panel.

Cost-of-Living Task and Finish Group

Members of the Cost-of-Living Task & Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Chris Wills, has received evidence on a range of areas of concern and the final report will be considered by the Panel at the next People Panel meeting in January.

In the meantime, and as requested previously, the Task & Finish group asks that the Council and all members actively promote and share information on available support, through communities, networks and partnerships, to ensure that local people at risk of, or experiencing difficulty and hardship are aware of help and support that may be of assistance.