



People Panel

Date: Thursday, 24 November 2022

Time: 10:02

Venue: Flensburg Room

Present: Councillor Mrs Christine Finlayson, Councillor Colin Glover, Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell, Councillor Mrs Linda Mitchell, Councillor Tim Pickstone, Councillor David Shepherd, Councillor Miss Jeanette Whalen, Councillor Christopher Wills

Also Present: Councillor J Mallinson - Leader
Councillor Ellis - Governance, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Mallinson - Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

Officers: Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
Health and Wellbeing Manager
Head of Property Services
Communities and Culture Officer
Head of Human Resources
Policy and Performance Officer
Policy and Scrutiny Officer

PEP.49/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of the Deputy Chief Executive.

PEP.50/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct the following declarations were submitted in respect of agenda item A.2 - Community Centre Sustainability - Current and Post LGR:

Councillor Glover declared an interest as he was the City Council's representative on the Currock Community Centre Trustee Board.

Councillor McKerrell declared an interest as she was a Trustee of the Dalston Recreation Centre.

Councillor Pickstone declared an interest as he was a Trustee of the Longtown Memorial Hall Community Centre.

Councillor Miss Whalen declared an interest as she was the City Council's representative on the Yewdale Community Centre Management Committee.

Councillor Wills declared an interest as he was the City Council's representative on the Currock Community Centre Trustee Board.

Councillor Mrs Mitchell declared an interest as she was the City Council's representative on the Harraby Community Centre Management Committee.

Councillor Wills declared an interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.3 -Youth Projects and Engagement. His interest related to the fact he was the Vice Chair of the Rock Youth Project.

PEP.51/22 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - That items in Part A be dealt with in public and items in private be dealt with in Part B.

PEP.52/22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - It was noted that Council, at its meeting on 8 November 2022, received and adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 25 August 2022 and 6 October 2022. The Chair signed the minutes.

PEP.53/22 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been subject of call-in.

PEP.54/22 COMMUNITY CENTRE SUSTAINABILITY – CURRENT AND POST LGR

The Head of Health and Wellbeing submitted an overview of the current Carlisle City Council revenue funding, additional support arrangements and lease arrangements of the Community Centres prior to the transfer of assets and support to Cumberland Council on 1 April 2023. (CS.36/22)

The Chair acknowledged the importance of capturing the outcomes from Community Centres and the impact they had on communities, their work was integral in supporting the Council in delivering its priorities.

The Head of Property Services highlighted the lease renewal process detailing why it was vital that all of the outcomes from the Community Centres were captured and how those outcomes would impact the consideration of future lease terms and offer.

Members were concerned that short leases prevented Community Centres from applying for funding and questioned what options were available to provide assurances or support to Community Centres in applying for vital funding. The Panel also had concerns that Community Centres could not prepare budgets as they did not know if they would receive funding following the transfer to Cumberland Council.

The Head of Health and Wellbeing responded that the Cumberland Council would have a similar budget process and timescales to the City Council which would include consultation that Members and Community Centres could respond to.

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources explained that all authorities needed a three or five year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Community Centre budget was a recurring budget in the City Council's MTFP and this would be transferred to Cumberland Council. The Corporate Director added that the Cumberland Council had some major decisions to make regarding its budget and she would discuss the matter with Cumberland Council's S.151 Officer to determine if the Executive had made their priorities known.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder provided assurances that the health agenda took into consideration the benefits and successes of the Community Centres and this work would be progressed through the health workstream.

Referring to the lease renewal and linked funding the Head of Property Services reported that the review had just begun and would take approximately a year. Additional staff resource had been brought into the Property Team to focus on the work, the outcome of the review would feed into the 2023/24 budget and help determine the structure and makeup of the leases.

The Chair asked how the Council could support Centres who had shorter leases to access the funding they needed and continue to deliver the outcomes in the community. The Head of Property Services explained that all of the original leases had been for twenty five years, a number of the leases had changed or been extended on a case by case basis. The review had started as the resources were now in place to be able to undertake a full strategic review.

The Chair raised an issue at Morton Community Centre where money had been paid by the Centre for works that would now not be completed before the transfer, he questioned if this money would be returned. The Head of Property Services undertook to investigate the matter further.

The Head of Health and Wellbeing informed the Panel that the Council was committed to support Community Centres to secure funding wherever possible and had contacted funding providers to support the process for the Centres as required.

A Member asked it was possible to grant all Community Centres with an interim renewed lease whilst the review was being undertaken. The Head of Property Services clarified that the City Council no longer had the power to grant leases and any changes to the leases would now be a decision for the Shadow Cumberland Council. He confirmed that there was a process for the Shadow Authority to grant a lease should the need arise.

The Head of Property Services reported that there had been some recruitment issues, however, resources had been secured to undertake the review as a key piece of work. He asked that all Community Centres submit evidence of their successes, good work and best practice so the information could be captured and submitted to the Cumberland Council for consideration as part of their decision making. He stressed that this was an opportunity to showcase the work being carried out the local community and how it could be rationalised or aggregated to improve services and lower operating costs and make the Community Centres even more vibrant.

In response to questions the Head of Health and Wellbeing stated that Carlisle was unique in the way it funded Community Centres adding that Community Centres came under Public Health and Communities in the draft structure for the new authority.

RESOLVED - That the Panel:

1) acknowledged all of the outstanding work being carried out in Community Centres to deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes;

2) request the following written responses:

- information on the condition survey / maintenance backlogs of Community Centres
- information from the Cumberland Council S.151 Officer on the financial priorities of the Executive
- information on the return of the monies paid by Morton Community Centre from works not yet carried out

3) request that the Executive seek the opportunity to progress leases which were less than 25 years before 31 March 2023. If this was not possible the Panel asked that the City Council supports the Community Centre in applying for funding where possible;

4) request that a letter be sent to all Community Centres encouraging them to provide details of their output, outcomes, successes and best practice to inform the review.

PEP.55/22 YOUTH PROJECTS AND ENGAGEMENT

The Head of Health and Wellbeing presented an overview of current and potential youth engagement in Carlisle District (CS.37/22).

The Head of Health and Wellbeing reported that representatives of Cumbria County Council had been unable to attend the meeting as planned and would attend a future meeting of the Panel to provide plans for moving into the new authority.

The Communities and Culture Officer detailed a number of projects and their outcomes that had been successful across the district including the Food Summit, work with James Rennie School, ongoing work with the Bulgarian Community, new projects at Hammonds Pond, street art and workshops.

The Chair commented that it was important that youth engagement was well resourced as there was so much potential to address anti-social behaviour issues and get young people involved in and take responsibility for their own communities. He felt it was vital that a proper framework was established to attract funding as the LGR moved forward.

In considering the report and presentation Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Was the Youth Council or Youth Parliament still running?

The Communities and Culture Officer explained that Covid had impacted the work, as a result an opportunity had arisen for the Council to be involved.

- Members noted that engagement needed to happen at an early age and outlined some opportunities for modern engagement which could take place in a short timescale and be meaningful.

The Communities and Culture Officer agreed that strategically it was important to engage with young people before the age of fourteen and give them a sense of belonging and community. He agreed that quick short sessions, that would not require a lot of resources, had the potential to be very successful and could lead to more resourcing.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder acknowledged the excellent work that was being undertaken and felt it was important that Cumberland Council build on the work to date. In addition the Portfolio Holder set out some of the award winning work being carried out to support apprenticeships in the County.

- Did the Council engage with and support young carers?

The Communities and Culture Officer detailed a project with Carlisle United that took twenty five young carers and their families to Carlisle United matches. He reminded the Panel that it was important that the whole family was engaged to ensure that the right support, respite, and opportunities were made available. Although work had been carried out more projects were needed.

- How were young people engaged in the planning process especially for large long term projects such as the St Cuthbert's Garden Village?

The Communities and Culture Officer noted that some of the previous engagement had not been successful, he suggested a more appropriate approach would be for workshop sessions to go to schools that were facilitated by officers.

RESOLVED - That the Panel welcomed the opportunity to bring groups and individuals together to look at different aspects of life in the district and contribute to future planning.

PEP.56/22 SICKNESS ABSENCE QUARTER 2 2022/23

The Head of Human Resources presented the authority's sickness absence levels for the period 1 April and 30 September 2022 and other sickness absence information (CS.35/22).

The Head of Human Resources reported that the Improving Attendance Policy had been in place for a year and it had been anticipated that the benefits of the revised policy would start to be realised during this financial year. The report set out the current sickness statistics, with the number of days lost per FTE equating to 4.9 in the first half of 2022/23, compared with 5.9 for the same period in 2021/22.

The Head of Human Resources stated that there had been a 17% decrease in overall days lost per employee when compared to the same period in the previous year. 39 employees had been absent long-term (4 working weeks or more), 5 less than the same period of the previous year.

There continued to be a clear correlation between long term sickness absence and the overall performance of the council in relation to absence. Overall performance improvement in this area was likely to be achieved through proactive management of long-term sickness absence through regular supportive discussion and early engagement with our occupational health provider, as set out in the Improving Attendance Policy.

Over the course of the last quarter the HR Advisers had again been working closely with managers to oversee absences and the number of employees absent continues to steadily decline. This had resulted in a decrease in number of days lost compared to last year's Quarter 2. Based on current trends it was anticipated that the Council would continue to see a definite and clear improvement in the absence rates for this financial year

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- When absences were identified as being muscular skeletal work related was there a procedure in place to learn lessons and change practices or procurement as a result?

The Head of Human Resources confirmed that any work related incidents were followed up through the Council's Health and Safety Team, in addition all incidents discussed at the six weekly trade union meeting. The Head of Health and Wellbeing added that procedures were in place to ensure all equipment being used was fully serviced or new and safety monitoring was also carried out to ensure there were no adverse implications of using equipment.

- How did the authority ensure that staff working from home were not working whilst ill?

The Head of Human Resources responded that it was expected that the manager had a good relationship with staff and were able to monitor the situation and manage effectively.

- Could the nature of the work carried out in Community Services be a reason for the low number of completed Return to Work Interviews and was there an opportunity to review the Policy to allow additional time for services that had outdoor or remote workers?

The Head of Human Resources confirmed that discussions were taking place with managers to determine what the barriers were for completing the interviews within the given timescales, the results of this and how the matter could be addressed would be reported back to the Panel in the next report.

RESOLVED - That the Sickness Absence Report Quarter 2 2022/23 (CS.35/22) be noted.

The meeting adjourned at 12.00noon and reconvened at 12.06pm.

PEP.57/22 REVENUE BUDGET OVERVIEW AND MONITORING BUDGET - APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2022

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted an overview of the Council's General Fund revenue budgetary position for the period April to September 2022 for revenue schemes only. The report also included details of balance sheet management issues and bad debts written off in the period. (RD.41/22).

Set out at paragraph 2 was the summarised budgetary position as at September 2022; the main variances were as summarised at paragraph 2.4. The Council's financial position, which was affected by a number of external factors which had a financial impact during the course of the year and ultimately at the year end, would continue to be closely monitored and reported more fully in a future monitoring report. It would be important to maintain a prudent approach so as to ensure a sustainable budget position for future years to avoid any significant variance at the year end.

The matter was considered by the Executive at its meeting on 21 November 2022 (Minute EX.150/22 referred).

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- What had been the financial impact of the increase to fuel prices, energy costs and other inflationary issues?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that a 30% increase in gas cost and a 25% increase in electricity costs had been budgeted for. Energy was provided through a County Council framework and so far there had been no major variances, however the matter was closely monitored.

In response to a further question the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources explained that there was no update available on the delay to the Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention Review. Provisions had been agreed for a business rate pooling arrangement for the two new authorities, once the settlement figure was released the authorities had twenty eight days to opt out of the arrangements.

RESOLVED - That the Revenue Budget Overview and Monitoring Report: April to September 2022 (RD.41/22) be noted.

PEP.58/22 CAPITAL BUDGET OVERVIEW AND MONITORING BUDGET - APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2022

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources Holder submitted report RD.42/22 providing an overview of the budgetary position of the City Council's capital programme for the period April to September 2022. Detailed therein were the capital budget overview; the overall budget position for the various Directorates; the monitoring and control of expenditure against budget allocations and the exercise of virement.

As at the end of September, expenditure of £6,396,970 had been incurred on the Council's core capital programme. When considered against the profiled budget of £8,212,365 that equated to an underspend of £1,815,395. The unspent balance remaining of the revised annual budget of £38,555,900 was £32,158,930. A review of the 2022/23 capital programme would be undertaken to identify accurate project profiles for the remainder of the financial year, any potential slippage into future years.

In addition, paragraph 3.9 recorded that a number of schemes were included in the capital programme for 2022/23 which required reports to be presented to the Executive for the release of funding before the project could go ahead. The Council's contribution towards the Southern Link Road would not be required in 2023/24 and would need to be added to Cumberland Council's capital programme as an increase to the overall project in 2023/24.

The Executive had considered the matter at its meeting on 21 November 2022 (Minute EX.151/22 referred).

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Could any funding from the Sustainable Warmth Grants be used to support individuals who could not afford to heat their homes?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources clarified that the Grants were to support capital schemes to provide insulation and other energy efficiency measures. She reminded the Panel that there were a number of grants and schemes available to support households in need.

- The Town Deal and Future High Street Funds still had a significant amount money, would this roll over to the new authority?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources confirmed the funding would roll over as capital schemes. In response to a further question she stated that should any changes to the use of the money be required it would need to be agreed by government and this would require a discussion with the Corporate Director of Economic Development.

- A Member asked if the scheme for the £110,000, recently agreed by Council, could ensure that some of the money went to rural areas.

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources responded that the funding had been agreed by Council and the scheme for the distribution of the funds was being prepared. The funds would be available to anyone who met the criteria where ever they lived in the district.

- In response to a question the Head of Health and Wellbeing confirmed that the crematorium infrastructure scheme would not be completed before vesting day as it was an eighteen month project.

- The Panel asked for further information on the Disabled Facilities Grant underspend, feedback on the impact of the changes to the Policy and details of any spend commitments.

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources agreed to submit a written response to the Panel.

RESOLVED - 1) That the capital Budget Overview and Monitoring Report: April to September 2022 (RD.42/22) be noted;

2) That the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources provide a written response regarding the reasons for the underspend in the Disabled Facilities Grant budget along with feedback on the impact of the changes made to the flexibility of the Policy and an overview of the budget profile including commitments, future spends and challenges.

PEP.59/22 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted the quarter 2 2022/23 performance against current Service Standards and an update on the delivery of the Carlisle Plan 2021-23 actions as defined in the Plan. Performance against the Panel's 2022/23 Key Performance Indicators were also included (PC.27/22).

The Policy and Performance Officer drew the Panel's attention to the Summary of

Exceptions and the associated reasons.

The Policy and Performance Officer agreed to provide the Panel with a written update regarding the increase of 10% to the end of private rented tenancies and what the Council could do to help the situation moving forward.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Quarter 2 Performance Report 2022/23 (PC.27/22) be noted;

2) The Policy and Performance Officer provide the Panel with a written update regarding the increase of 10% to the end of private rented tenancies and what the Council could do to help the situation moving forward.

PEP.60/22 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.24/22 which gave an overview of matters related to the Scrutiny Panel's work.

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer highlighted a number of outstanding resolutions from previous meetings and stated that some would be completed following the meeting. During discussion the Panel agreed that resolutions PEP.33/22 (from 25 August 2022) be changed back to pending for monitoring purposes. Although the Executive had considered the Panel's recommendations the actions had not yet been completed.

The Chair asked that a report on the Victorian Health Suite be submitted to a future meeting to address the outstanding actions and detail the work that had been taken to protect and preserve the site whilst it was vacant.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Overview report OS.24/22 be noted.

2) That resolutions PEP.33/22 be changed back to pending.

3) That a final update report on the Victorian Health Suite be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Meeting ended at: 13:03