



Report to

Council

Meeting Date: 8th November 2022

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Resources Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report – Councillor Christine Finlayson**

Carlisle Welfare Reform Board

Carlisle Welfare Reform Board is a multi-agency partnership group providing an effective coordinated local partnership response to mitigate where possible, the impact of welfare reform and hardship across Carlisle and District.

To achieve this the group explores and monitors local impacts, also anticipates potential impacts of the implementation of welfare changes, shares information updates, explores best practice, challenges, supports and assists each other to ensure the best outcomes for clients.

The group also forms a two-way communication with the Carlisle Resilience Group and when necessary, the statutory Cumbria Local Resilience Forum.

The Group continues to focus on the following:-

- Identifying gaps in the local services, and driving activities required to close gaps
- Sharing timely pertinent information in relation to welfare reform, hardship and other external factors across Carlisle and District, and uses the information to inform and support coordinated responses where possible
- Ensures planned and coordinated welfare reform/hardship activities are implemented reflecting local shared priorities

Working Together to:-

- Share relevant key partnership information improving communication data sharing
- Identifying early opportunities to coordinate activities to reduce barriers to multi agency working

Core group members of the group are representatives of:-

- Carlisle City Council , Portfolio Holders, Deputy Chief Executive, Housing, Welfare, Policy, Contact and Benefits
- Housing Associations (Riverside, Impact, Castles and Coasts)
- Department for Work and Pension
- Cumbria Law Centre
- Food bank/ Churches together
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Clinical Commissioning Group

Although continuing to be hosted and supported by Carlisle City Council, the Chair of this group has been handed to Shane Byrne from the DWP.

The newly appointed Chair attended the Panel Meeting and gave a very heart warming and comprehensive verbal overview and presentation to Members, on the group's focus for the next six months.

It was most enlightening and encouraging to hear how well supported and considered residents are provided for and helped on every aspect of need and support.

Revenues and Benefits

It was so good to hear from the Revenue and Benefits that at the moment it really is Business as Usual.

With regard to Council Tax, there is a good record of payments, exceeding last year. Things might change but no signs at the moment. There were fewer reminders issued and much fewer final notices leading to less enforcement.

There has been a compliance phase, accepting help to make their payment.

There has been money saved because the Team

- Don't have to enforce so much
- Customers are paying much better
- Council tax reduction is helping
- Residents are receiving help to get their benefits
- Providing their trained expertise to engage with customers when they engage with Officers
- Income is not affecting people at the moment

Environment Agency Update on Flood Management

Since 2015 there has been substantial work carried out on existing flood defences.

Some points perhaps of great interest, especially for those families who's homes have been further flood proofed:-

Phase 1 and 1a

- The raising of existing flood defences by 4km along the River Eden and the Petteril protecting 1,279 homes and 107 non-residential properties
- The Old Laundry Culvert Warwick Road has had significant work done
- Rickerby Park, Brunstock Beck protecting 32 residential homes and one non residential property
- Gosling Syke upgrading the culvert protecting fifty three homes, and two non residential properties

Phase 2

Raising and extending flood defences from Trinity school to Carlisle Castle protecting 50 residential and 33 non-residential properties

Other protected areas include; Parham Beck, an area of Warwick bridge, Low Crosby, Melbourne park and Etterby Terrace

Cllr Christine Finlayson
Chairman