

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

WEDNESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2012 AT 7.09 PM

PRESENT: Professor Councillor J D Hendry (Chairman) (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor C W Glover (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor Mrs J Riddle (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor Dr L Tickner (Carlisle City Council)

Councillor R Auld (Chairman, Carlisle Parish Councils
Association)

Councillor B Craig (Carlisle Parish Councils Association)
Ms C Rankin (Parish Liaison Officer, CALC)
Mr D Claxton (CALC)

Councillor B Kirk (Beaumont Parish Council)
Mrs M McKenna (Beaumont Parish Council)
Councillor G Hodgson (Brampton Parish Council)
Councillor E Griffiths (Brampton Parish Council)
Councillor Ms C Ridley (Brampton Parish Council)
Councillor A Oliver (Burtholme Parish Council)
Councillor S Bowman (Hayton Parish Council)
Councillor G Clubbs (Hayton Parish Council)
Mr C Moth (Hethersgill Parish Council)
Councillor W Bundred (Kirkandrews on Esk Parish Council)
Ms P MacDonald (Orton Parish Council)
Councillor W Little (Orton Parish Council)
Councillor M Fox (Stanwix Rural Parish Council)
Councillor C Nicholson (Stanwix Rural Parish Council)
Ms S Kyle (Walton and Scaleby Parish Council)
Councillor B Earp (Wetheral Parish Council)
Councillor Ms D Poole (Wetheral Parish Council)
Councillor I Yates (Wetheral Parish Council)

Councillor T Allison (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor Mrs M Bowman (Carlisle City Council)

ALSO PRESENT :

Mr D Crossley (Deputy Chief Executive)
Mr M Lambert (Director of Governance)
Mr K Gerrard (Director of Community Engagement)
Mrs J Meek (Director of Economic Development)
Mr P Mason (Director of Resources)
Ms E Dixon (Carlisle Partnership Manager)
Mr R Cornwall (Project Manager, Local Area Agreement)
Mrs M Durham (Lead Committee Clerk)

Mr G Schubert (Development Manager – Sport and Physical Activity
Alliance Foundation (SPAA))

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Dr J Gooding (Town Clerk and Chief Executive)
Ms A Culleton (Director of Local Environment)
Councillor Mrs E B Martlew (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor A Quilter (Carlisle City Council)
Councillor K McIntosh (Cummersdale Parish Council)
Councillor C Slinger (Cumwhitton Parish Council)
Councillor M Ridley (Irthington Parish Council)
Mrs J Cherrie (Clerk) and the Chairman (Kingwater Parish Council)
Mr D Johnson (Clerk) and Councillor R Workman (Chairman) (St Cuthbert Without Parish Council)
Councillor Ms J Holland (Wetheral Parish Council)

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the joint meeting.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting between the City Council's Executive and Representatives from the Parish Councils held on 18 June 2012 were circulated.

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

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. PARISH CHARTER REVIEW

The Director of Community Engagement introduced this item of business, drawing attention to the following documents, copies of which were tabled:

- Draft Carlisle District Parish Charter
- Draft document entitled "Monitoring the effectiveness of the Parish Charter and related Working Agreements"; and
- The timetable for adoption of the Parish Charter

The Parish Charter and its Formal Arrangements formed the framework for joint working between the City Council and the Parishes. The Formal Arrangements were divided into key work areas and set out the responsibilities for both the City Council and the Parishes.

The Director of Community Engagement advised that the Parish Charter consultation period would run from 5 December 2012 to 20 February 2013, culminating in formal adoption by the City Council's Executive on 8 April 2012 (following its adoption by the Parishes at a prior date).

Councillor Auld endorsed the above timetable. He asked that Parish Councils take time at their respective Parish meetings to give consideration to the Parish Charter and compile structured responses which could then be fed back through the consultation process.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Parish Charter consultation period be noted.

(2) That Parish Councils be requested to consider the Parish Charter and compile structured responses to the consultation.

6. IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN / CHILD POVERTY

Further to discussions at the last joint meeting, the Leader gave an overview of some of the issues associated with child poverty in Cumbria.

Although the issue had been identified by the City Council as a key issue, the Carlisle Parish Council Association felt that improving outcomes for children was more important, particularly as services (such as the summer play schemes) had been cut. Data showed increased child poverty in the Longtown and Rockcliffe area.

A consultation exercise, seeking views on how best to address child poverty, was underway and would run until 15 February 2013. Any views or advice would be very much welcomed.

He further recognised the very positive work being piloted through the Carlisle and District Sport and Physical Activity Alliance (SPAA) Foundation and the Carlisle Youth Zone.

The Leader then introduced Mr Garry Schubert, Development Manager, SPAA to the meeting.

Mr Schubert explained that the purpose was to provide an overview of what the Foundation delivered; examples of work undertaken in the community; together with their aspirations for 2013.

The Foundation, which was currently governed by a Shadow Board, had been involved with various programmes and projects across schools and communities. Details of the key roles and responsibilities and a leaflet entitled "Summer FunTime!" had been tabled. The Foundation had been encouraged by the level of support across the district which had highlighted the growing need to provide sporting activities and recreation for children and young people. A large number of key organisations were interested in working in partnership.

Mr Schubert stated that work was directed towards making activities more accessible and affordable to local need; joining and linking of services. Currently the Foundation employed four full time staff, and had been successful in employing up to ten casual staff. Local business support had also been attracted via the Cumberland Building Society and Storey Homes.

He drew attention to the case study and the remarkable success of the Rural Fun Time Scheme during 2012, details of which were provided.

In conclusion, Mr Schubert invited Parish representatives to take the information tabled back to their respective Parishes. The SPAA Foundation website was up and running, in addition to which he would be very happy to speak to individual Parish Councils if desired.

The Leader sought clarification as regards the relationship between the Foundation and the Carlisle Youth Zone.

In response, Mr Schubert advised that discussions were ongoing with Senior Managers at the Youth Zone with a view to linking up and working in partnership.

Councillor M Fox commented that, although the scheme had proved to be very useful, helpful and successful in terms of engagement, it only attracted 5 – 12 year olds. There was an issue around improved provision of activities within the rural area for older youths. Notwithstanding that issue, he considered investment in the SPAA to be well worth it.

Councillor Auld endorsed the sentiments expressed by Councillor Fox with regard to support and investment.

In response, Mr Schubert acknowledged the need for activities to be provided for the 13+ age group. It was important to gain an understanding of their needs and any advice which the Parishes could provide would be most helpful.

Councillor Auld was pleased to note that the Youth Zone was beginning to engage with rural areas. He suggested that Parish Councils get in touch with a view to making arrangements for activities in their areas.

In summary, the Leader commented upon the first class nature of the project and looked forward to it continuing into the future.

RESOLVED – That the update be welcomed and received.

7. REDUCTION IN THE CITY COUNCIL'S DISCRETIONARY GRANTS TO PARISHES

The Director of Resources submitted a Briefing Note, copies of which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Director of Resources indicated that he had written to advise Parish Councils in advance that, in setting their precepts for 2013/14 (and future years), they needed to be aware that as part of the 2013/14 Budget proposals, the City Council was recommending a reduction in the 'concurrent' grant paid to Parish Councils.

The background to that decision was that the City Council, in meeting the financial challenges of Revenue Support Grant cuts and reductions of income due to the economic downturn, had been required to reduce its expenditure on service provision by 34% since the 2010/11 financial year.

The Director of Resources explained that up until the 2013/14 budget deliberations the Council had been able to make most of the cuts without reducing its expenditure on discretionary grants.

Although the 2013/14 budget proposals recommended that 'concurrent' grants were reduced by 30%, the Executive had requested that the grant reduction be phased in over 2 years i.e. 15% per year (based on the 2012/13 'concurrent' grant). The impact on the Parishes was set out in the Briefing Paper.

The Director of Resources added that the proposed grant reductions would be subject to consultation prior to the Council agreeing its budget on 5 February 2013. Parishes were, however, recommended to take them into account when agreeing their 2013/14 precepts.

Mr Moth noted that the City Council had asked for all Parish precept decisions by 6 December 2012. Many Parish Council meetings had taken place prior to receipt of the Director's letter, showing that clearly there were issues around dates.

The Director of Resources apologised for the timing issues, but pointed out that detailed consideration of the Council's budget had only recently begun. He had written to the Parishes at the earliest opportunity and would allow Parishes to submit details of their precepts up until mid-January 2013 if required.

He then turned to the issue of the Localisation of Council Tax Support which was hugely complicated. He had prepared a paper setting out the apportionment of Council Tax Grant together with two separate scenarios (scenario 1 – the same precept is set as last year; and scenario 2 – the precept is set to achieve the same level of total income), copies of which were tabled.

The Director of Resources explained the implications for Parish Councils in some detail. He added that a meeting of the Cumbria Finance Officers was scheduled to take place on 10 December 2012, following which he would write to Parish Councils providing details of individual impacts.

In conclusion, the Director of Resources suspected that Parish Councils may wish to reset their precepts and, as previously stated, he would accept changes until mid-January 2013.

In response to a question from Councillor Nicholson, the Director of Resources advised that the savings to the local authority over two years would be in the region of £20,000.

Councillor Craig referred to the very difficult nature of the system and the fact that there were in excess of thirty Parish Councils. He questioned whether the administrative costs of implementing the saving had been calculated.

The Director of Resources responded that the calculations were undertaken via a spreadsheet, meaning that there were no associated administrative costs.

Mr Claxton stated that under the old arrangement the Government had funded 100% of Council Tax Benefits as opposed to only 90% under the new arrangements. CALC had entered into discussions with Eden District Council to ascertain how they would handle the matter. Eden was proposing that Parish Councils would receive 90% of the money handed down by Government, together with an element of the transitional grant. That meant an increase of 2.3% for Band D if Parish Councils wished to receive the same level of precept income for next year. There would also be an additional element for withdrawal of 'concurrent' services grant.

In response, the Director of Resources explained the measures under consideration with a view to protecting the Parishes.

Councillor Oliver questioned whether special Parish Council meetings would be required in order to set precepts within the timeframe identified by the City Council.

The Director of Resources reiterated that the 15 January 2013 deadline had been set in order to comply with the access to information procedure rules for publication of the reports submitted to the special Budget Council meeting in February 2013. If Parishes were experiencing problems they should contact him.

Mr Moth questioned the anticipated response to the proposed increase in precept, together with the likely income.

The Director of Resources advised that the setting of precepts was a matter of individual Parishes to determine.

Councillor Earp expressed concern that there would also be a reduction in village hall grants.

In response the Director of Economic Development commented that, following consideration, the Executive had agreed that there would be no reduction in grants to Village Halls.

Councillor Auld emphasised that village halls fulfilled an extremely important role within rural areas. Grant funding was therefore also of importance. He asked whether that decision would continue for two years.

The Director of Economic Development replied that would be a matter for the Executive to determine. The Director of Resources added that there was no indication at this time that the decision would be revisited.

Councillor Auld said that, although the Parishes understood the pressures upon the City Council to produce a balanced budget, the proposed reduction in 'concurrent' grant would impact on how Parishes calculated their precepts. Certain Parishes had cemeteries and burial grounds to manage and he expressed the hope that the proposed reduction in grant would not continue over two years.

Councillor Fox made a plea for increased strategic thinking around management based upon reduced resources.

In summary, the Director of Resources reiterated that he would write to individual Parishes following the Cumbria wide meeting and extend the date for decisions on Parish precepts to 15 January 2013.

The Leader quoted from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement focussing, in particular, on the impacts faced by the City Council and Parish Councils. He then expressed grateful thanks the Director of Resources for the considerable thought and time which he had devoted to the matter.

RESOLVED – That updated position in respect of discretionary grants to Parish Councils be received.

8. LOCALITY WORKING

Councillor Auld reported that the Rural Support Group was an important cross-over group, part of the Carlisle Local Strategic Partnership, and comprised Members, Officers and Parish representatives.

On 1 June 2009 a Chairman's meeting took place in Dalston, at which time it was agreed that bottom-up joint working between Parishes should be examined more closely. That led to issue based locality working.

Councillor Auld then gave a presentation on Locality Working, explaining what it was about; the benefits; fears; and the collaborative working already in existence in Cumbria and beyond.

In terms of what happened next, he advised that:

- consideration would be given to cluster boundaries;
- the Rural Support Group would produce a discussion paper - early 2013;
- the paper would be circulated to Parishes for a six week consultation period;
- consultation results would be considered by the CPCA;
- the CPCA would report to the Carlisle LSP; and
- further feedback would be provided to Parishes later in 2013

The Director of Community Engagement considered the presentation worthy of discussion, commenting that it would be appropriate to circulate a paper to all Parish Councils in the New Year.

In response to questions, Councillor Auld said that locality working was a matter for individual Parish Councils to consider. Consideration of amalgamation would be a lengthy process. It may be possible, for example, for Clerks to be shared whilst Parish Councils retained their autonomy.

The problem of how to generate interest had been highlighted in South Lakeland where the model had been forced upon Parishes. Councillor Auld did not believe that the City Council wished to take that stance, rather it was a matter for Parishes as to whether they wished to embrace collaborative working.

Councillor Nicholson indicated that he had initially been opposed to locality working, but that had changed. He highlighted the need to bear in mind that the overall administration of the county may change should unitary authorities come into being. Funding for Parishes could also change in such a scenario.

Councillor Auld believed that the type of collaborative working referred to would work very well in conjunction with unitary working in the County.

RESOLVED – That the update be received, and the issue of Locality Working be progressed as outlined above.

9. CLEANER CARLISLE – LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report updating Members on progress with the Cleaning up of Carlisle Campaign.

The Deputy Chief Executive emphasised that local amenity and environmental quality remained a key priority for residents, Members and the City Council's Executive. Additional funding of £155,000 for 2 years had been made available during last year's budget setting process to make improvements in the cleanliness of Carlisle. That had led to a three strand approach of improved cleansing and development of a new Enforcement and Education Team (including an Enforcement and Education Team Leader, two Enforcement and Education Officers and two Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Officers). He added that the new Team, which was officially in place from 15 October 2012, was already making good progress in terms of delivering educational messages and following those up with robust enforcement.

Details of the current position with regard to Enforcement; Signage; the 'Love Where You Live' Campaign; Education; Improved Cleansing; and Programmes of Work were provided.

The Deputy Chief Executive then drew Members' attention to the leaflet produced by the Council entitled 'Gulls and the law' a copy of which was appended to the report. He outlined the problems caused by gulls, together with the advice / action the Council would take with a view to addressing issue.

In conclusion the Deputy Chief Executive said that, with the coming on line of improved mechanisation; programmes of street cleansing; establishment of the new Enforcement and Education Team; and many of the planned processes coming to fruition, it was anticipated that the third quarter would see a significant improvement in the cleanliness of Carlisle.

Councillor Craig congratulated the Director of Local Environment and her Team for work undertaken. He also paid tribute to the work done by local people in the rural area.

Councillor Craig considered many of the problems (e.g. litter bins and seagulls) were due to a lack of education. Notwithstanding that, he believed that the system was working well.

Councillor Auld endorsed those sentiments, commenting that a recent visitor to Carlisle felt that the City was clean, bright and vibrant when compared with many other cities he had visited. He too congratulated the Council and local people for their efforts.

Speaking on behalf of Councillor Holland (Wetheral Parish Council), Councillor Auld questioned the costs associated with cleaning up Botchergate and whether traders contributed.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the recently appointed Enforcement and Education Team Leader was extremely enthusiastic about moving the Love Where You Live agenda forward. He undertook to provide a detailed breakdown on costs.

Councillor Auld asked a further question with regard to fly tipping which appeared to be happening on a regular basis.

Councillor Little indicated that he had two pet hates; fly tipping and chewing gum. He believed that the problem of fly tipping was greater for those Parishes located in close proximity to the City quoting a recent incident as an example. He suggested that improved signage to recycling centres may improve matters.

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive said that the Council was aware of the problems associated with fly tipping and the Enforcement and Education Team was focussed on addressing the matter. Meaningful intelligence was always welcomed and would be promptly acted upon.

A Parish representative added that fly tipping by small builders was also an issue.

Councillor Bundred queried whether consideration had been given to the problem of litter on grass verges, especially on the main roads (A7).

The Deputy Chief Executive replied that the Council was aware of the issue and could provide updates on how it was being addressed if that would be of assistance. A response team had been established as part of the Cleaner Carlisle project and could provide a more reactive service to requests from the public for cleansing between scheduled sweeps. Feedback on identified hot spots would be of assistance in that regard.

Councillor Allison questioned who was responsible for cleaning the CNDR. He had photographic evidence of littering along the route.

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive suggested that problems with litter should be reported to the City Council in the first instance, following which they could be addressed as appropriate.

Councillor Earp highlighted the problems associated to all night parking by heavy goods vehicles in lay-bys, questioning how that practice could be stopped.

Councillor Mrs Bowman alluded to a past problem at Kingstown Industrial Estate, commenting that the issue required careful consideration.

The Deputy Chief Executive undertook to take the matter up with the Enforcement and Education Team Leader.

RESOLVED – (1) That the update on Cleaner Carlisle – Love Where You Live be welcomed.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive arrange for a detailed breakdown of costs associated to cleaning up Botchergate to be provided in response to Councillor Holland's question; and to highlight the problems associated to overnight parking by heavy goods vehicles with the Enforcement and Education Team Leader.

10. BROADBAND UPDATE

Councillor Auld informed the meeting that the first Broadband Meets Localism Conference had taken place on 15 January 2011. It had taken two years to reach a position whereby the contract with British Telecom could be signed. That had take place last week.

He stressed that the project could not succeed without a properly rolled out programme. That would be considered by the County Council's Cabinet at the end of January 2013.

Councillor Auld outlined the complicated logistics surrounding roll out of the project; together with the associated priorities. It was recognised that a mix of technologies would be essential to provide broadband to remote areas. He cautioned that the success thereof was dependent upon uptake.

Seventy five percent of Parishes in Cumbria had appointed a broadband champion. He expressed the hope that all would be able to identify someone within the Parish to take an interest and engage with the County Council and British Telecom so that individual Parishes were not disadvantaged.

The Leader thanked Councillor Auld for his very helpful update.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the CPCA Executive be requested to consider dates for the joint meetings between the Executive and Parish Councils Association in 2013 [June (to be hosted by Carlisle Parish Councils Association) and December (to be hosted by the City Council)] and convey details thereof to the City Council.

12. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Leader thanked all those present for their attendance at what had been a very useful and constructive meeting. He extended compliments of the season and wished everybody a safe journey home.

Speaking on behalf of the Parishes, Councillor Auld thanked the City Council for hosting the meeting and for providing excellent topics for discussion.

(The meeting ended at 8.50 pm)