

Place Panel

Date: Thursday, 16 June 2022

Time: 16:00

Venue: Flensburg Room

Present: Councillor Trevor Allison, Councillor James Bainbridge, Councillor Ms Jo Ellis-Williams, Councillor Mrs Anne Glendinning, Councillor Michael Mitchelson, Councillor Peter Sunter, Councillor Dr Les Tickner
Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell (for Councillor Mrs Linda Mitchell)

Also Present: Councillor Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Bowman - Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder

Officers: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Homeless Services Manager
Policy and Communications Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Ms Thorn - Director of Homes & Communities, Riverside
Mr Jones - Director of Development, Riverside

PLP.01/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Mitchell.

PLP.02/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

PLP.03/22 PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was agreed that the items in Part A be dealt with in public and the items in private be dealt with in Part B.

PLP.04/22 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

PLP.05/22 RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION ACTIVITY UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Mr Thorn and Ms Jones to the meeting. The Corporate Director of Economic Development presented information about Riverside's work to support tenants an

communities in Carlisle (ED.11/22)

Ms Thorn and Mr Jones gave a presentation covering: Riverside's economic contribution within Carlisle; investments made in its properties, employees and customers; regeneration projects; a 10 year place based strategy; and, Riverside's partnership approach.

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

- Was Riverside able to access the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) funding provided by the Council?

Ms Thorn advised that Riverside operated a similar fund which provided for small property alterations, adaptations that were more structural in nature were more likely to seek DFG funding.

The Panel welcomed proposals to update existing housing stock in the district. Mr Jones stated that Riverside was aware of the St Cuthbert's Garden Village project, discussions with the Council had focused on the importance of developing existing neighbourhoods in the district to modern build standards. An aspect of those developments would be the inclusion of sustainable elements into properties and initial testing was underway with customers to identify the most suitable products.

- Was Riverside's Botchergate office open to the public?

Ms Thorn advised that the office was open on an appointment only basis rather than drop in as it did not have reception facilities.

- A Member commented, in regard to the proposed redevelopment of single bedroom flat style properties in Morton, that the idea was welcomed by residents in the area. It was important that the new properties were highly energy efficient and he hoped the new dwellings would utilise innovative design.

Mr Jones responded that Riverside were, on a project out with the district, exploring modern methods of construction, their implementation was dependent on them being financially viable. Different ownership models for example multi-tenure and secured affordable rented properties would also be considered for Morton but were dependent on the agreed funding package.

Another Member noted that 74% of homeless people required single occupancy dwellings, she sought clarification that Riverside would remain able to meet demand for one bedroom properties.

Mr Jones replied that research had been undertaken on local housing need; whilst the portfolio of single bedroom properties was being rationalised in the Morton area, that work was part of an overall mixture of properties in the district to ensure a good mix of property types.

Ms Thorn added that the Council had indicated a need for one bedroom properties, Morton was not considered the most appropriate location with preference being given to the city centre, however, that work remained in development.

- What was Riverside's view on the government's updated Right to Buy policy?

Ms Thorn noted that the policy now required Registered Social Landlords to offer Shared

Ownership properties with a stake for the resident of as little as 1%, the new policy also imposed a duty to replace properties bought under the scheme.

- The Chair noted that the £35M regeneration project had £17M of committed funds, he asked where the remaining monies would be found?

The Corporate Director of Economic Development explained that the inclusion of that information in the report was essentially to inform Members of plans for regeneration in the future. Riverside were aware of the decision to bring unitary councils to the area, and any decision with regard to future funding would be for the new Cumberland Council.

- A Member asked for further detail on the Riverside Foundation's packages for those looking to return to work or education.

Ms Thorn advised that the Foundation had disbursed £75,000 of funds in the preceding year to help people in work poverty change to better employment, the fund had also supported people to provide clothing or transport to interviews for employment or education.

Mr Jones provided an overview of the recent Demonstration Project which had helped to bridge the skills gap by training local students at Carlisle College in construction industry skills who had then worked on building new properties. The Panel discussed the importance of providing skills training that was relevant to the modern workforce.

- The Chair commented that in certain areas there were properties where furniture or appliances had been disposed of in the garden area rather than properly removed, which had a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area.

Ms Thorn stated that the matter was a concern for Riverside, often customer were unable to afford the cost of removal due to the increased cost of living. She indicated that the organisation would be happy to look at the matter in partnership with others.

RESOLVED- That the Panel had considered the report and presentation and discussed key points with senior managers from Riverside. (ED.11/22)

PLP.06/22 CUMBRIA CHOICE – UPDATE ON THE HOUSING REGISTER

The Homeless Services Manager presented the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy review, supported by an updated Equality Impact Assessment and a summary of the key changes from the previous Policy. (GD.35/22)

The Homeless Services Manager reported that the updated Policy related to homelessness as well as allocations, it was intended to ensure greater clarity for households in Carlisle who were currently registered for social housing or who may register in the future.

In considering the updated Policy Members raised the following comments and questions:

- How would performance of the Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy be monitored and reviewed?

The Homeless Services Manager advised that the Programme Board, which was made up of representatives of all organisations involved would receive a performance report on a quarterly basis.

- A Member noted that there were seven housing associations who utilised the Choice Based Lettings Allocation, was there a standard method for applying for properties and were the number of appeals anticipated to rise?

The Homeless Services Manager explained that the onus was on the applicant to respond to the lettings available, it was possible that the number of appeals may increase, but it was not expected to do so.

In relation to families which had separated the Choice Based Lettings system favoured the party which had custody of the child for allocating larger properties i.e more than one bedroom. In cases where joint custody had been awarded that was potentially problematic.

The Homeless Services Manager responded that oftentimes it was a matter of affordability and individual circumstances. For applicants in receipt of Universal Credit, the benefit only paid for the number of bedrooms that would be used.

- Who was responsible for policing the children of tenants whose behaviour was anti-social?

The Homeless Services Manager advised that in the first instance the matter should be taken up with the relevant individual landlord.

The Chair noted that the policy was relatively new and suggested that a further update report be submitted to the Panel in six months. The Panel indicated its assent.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Panel had considered and commented on the Cumbria Choice Allocations Policy. (GD.35/22)

2) That an update report be submitted to the Panel in six months time.

PLP.07/22 HOMELESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2021-2026 – UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Homeless Services Manager provided an update on the delivery of the strategic aims and priority actions in year one of the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026. (GD.33/22)

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

- Page 182 of the document pack referred to "Assertive outreach support and advice is provided to rough sleepers within 48 hours of receiving a location report": a Member asked how assertive was defined in that context.

The Homeless Services Manager advised that it meant staff actively tried to engage with rough sleepers in an effort to identify what services they would require to support them.

The Member further asked the Officer to explain what was meant by "Development of local temporary accommodation tenancy sustainment support resources as a pilot delivery programme" (page 183 refers).

The Homeless Services Manager responded that the programme was an intense form of support provided for more marginalised members of society.

- There were variations in service across the districts that would combine to form the new Cumberland Authority, how was the matter being addressed?

The Homeless Services Manager stated the relevant Officers from each authority were meeting with a view to developing a unified approach to service delivery.

In response to a further question from the Chair about the changes unitary authority may bring, the Homeless Services Manager noted that the existing local connection requirement to access homeless services would expand to cover the entirety of the new Council area.

- Referring to Appendix A a Member noted the difference in percentage of evictions in the private rented sector compared to the social sector following the lifting of the eviction freeze imposed as part of the Covid 19 restrictions, he asked whether the Council was able to cope with the increase?

The Homeless Services Manager confirmed that the Council had, in delivering its statutory homelessness duties, been able to cope. The ceasing of evictions during the pandemic had potentially created a peak that may level out in future. Another factor that may have an impact on the number of evictions was the rising cost of living.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder considered the government proposal to end 'no fault evictions' would have a substantial impact.

The Homeless Services Manager clarified that the proposal was to extend the time period of a no fault eviction to six months as such the proposal would delay any such evictions but would not necessarily reduce the number of them.

RESOLVED - That the Panel had considered the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026 (GD.33/22)

PLP.08/22 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

The Policy and Communications Manager presented the End of Year 2021/22 performance against the 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 2021/22 Key performance Indicators were included as a dashboard. (PC.07/22)

There were four exceptions detailed in the report:

SS08: Proportion of official land authority searches completed on time

SS09: Proportion of new waste and recycling bins, bags and containers delivered on time (within 10 working days)

CSe14: Actual car parking revenue as a percentage of car parking expenditure

CSe22: Actual city centre pedestrianised zone revenue as a percentage of city centre expenditure

ED12: % of valid full plan applications determined or checked by Building Control within 15 working days.

In considering the Annual Report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- In relation to SS03: Percentage of household waste sent for recycling, what impact had the inclusion of the Household Waste and Recycling Centres had on the meeting of the service standard?

The Policy and Communications Manager advised that the target had been broadened to include those areas during the year and it was not seen to have had a great impact on the meeting of the service standard target. As set out in the report, the authority was waiting for new national and local service standard targets to be issued.

The Chair further commended the waste services team for it missing only 0.2% of waste or recycling collections which was a fantastic figure.

- When was the stakeholder and public engagement on the Market Square project scheduled to take place, and what methods of information gathering would be used?

The Policy and Communications Manager anticipated that information on the events would be circulated to all Members but undertook to liaise with the Corporate Director of Economic Development and provide a written response to the Panel.

A Member commented that it was important that the Panel were consulted as part of the process, particularly in relation to uses and design.

- A Member asked what risks to funding were known to be associated with the Carlisle Southern Link Road that may impact the progression of the St Cuthbert' Garden Village project.

The Policy and Communications Manager reminded the Panel that capacity funding had been agreed, he undertook to liaise with the Corporate Director of Economic Development to gather further information and provide a written response to the Panel on the matter.

- Regarding Carlisle Plan objective 11 - Delivering the Green Spaces Strategy and Supporting the delivery of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), a Member asked if progress had been made in respect of the Waverly Viaduct?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder responded that the Council's offer to underwrite the footpath remained. However, Cumbria County Council was the Highway Authority and was therefore responsible for making the appropriate Orders to enable the project.

The Member responded that he felt the project should be given another push prior to unitary authority coming into existence.

- A Member commented in relation to the development of the Rural Strategy that it was important that Parish Councils were involved.

The Policy and Communications Manager undertook to pass that comment on to the appropriate Officer.

- Were local contractors used to deliver works under the Disabled Facilities Grants?

The Policy and Communications Manager confirmed local contractors were used and noted that as with the wider construction industry there had been impacts as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Panel had scrutinised the performance of the City Council with a view to seeking continuous improvement in how the Council delivers its priorities. (PC.07/22)

2) That the Policy and Communications Manager provide written information to the Panel on:

- i) the dates, times and methods of data collection for the stakeholder and public consultation events on the Market Square project;
- ii) the known risk to the funding of the Carlisle Southern Link Road and its impact on the St Cuthbert's Garden Village project.

PLP.09/22 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.16/22 providing an overview of matters related to the Place Panel's work. Arrangements would be made for a site visit by the Panel to Talkin Tarn in due course and a report on the matter would be submitted to the September meeting.

There were a number of legacy issues remaining from the previous scrutiny function. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would provide a summary of those in the next report to the Panel along with an updated Work Programme.

RESOLVED - That the Overview Report incorporating Key Decision items relevant to the Place Panel be noted (OS.16/22).

The Meeting ended at: 17:48