

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

COMMUNITY

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Panel met on 14th July and the major work of the meeting was on matters relating to housing and housing related issues.

As part of the scrutiny of the Council's Partnership Agreement with Riverside, Carlisle, we received a verbal report from their officers on matters highlighted at the Panel's January meeting, where a request for an update on them had been made. Whilst welcoming the verbal report and the progress on those matters, it was requested that the Panel would receive a written report in six months time, in particular on the review Riverside had carried out on those vacant properties that had been adapted for disability needs and whether they would be suitable to be offered to tenants who have appropriate needs.

Detailed mention was made to the Riverside officers of concerns regarding the manner of their communications with leaseholders plus the worries for leaseholders of the costs they would have to face regarding the installation of fire safety precautions. The officers acknowledged there were issues regarding their communications with leaseholders, that lessons had been learned from the process and that a leaseholder group had been formed in order to address the concerns around this scheme.

A short presentation on the Association's Development and Sheltered Housing schemes together with information on the role of Riverside in relation to the Mortgage rescue Scheme was also received.

The Panel welcomed the report on the work of the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Project which was last reviewed by them in October. The project will cover all six districts in the county and will be targeted at neighbourhoods identified as having high needs in regard to housing insulation. It was satisfying to hear that it is a requirement of the scheme that at least 50% of the funding would be used for those vulnerable and high priority groups. We will expect a further update on this project later in the year together with information on the Government's Green Deal project when it becomes available.

The Panel carried out a lengthy scrutiny of the plans for the Shaddongate Gateway Centre. Negotiations are taking place with the Council's preferred partner, the Carlisle YMCA, who will work with the Council on the priorities, business plan and vision for the Centre and if all negotiations are completed satisfactorily, handover is planned for early 2012.

The Panel put questions to Council officers and the representatives of the YMCA relating to the business plan, timetables, targets, risk assessments and services and asked for the City Council's Risk Assessment together with the YMCA's Risk Mobilisation be circulated to the Panel. It was also agreed that information on the further development of this project should be provided for examination at our

November meeting.

A report on the details of the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan was received and welcomed. Improving food standards is an important element in addressing the health needs of our community and carrying out the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Finally, the Panel discussed the Forward Plan items relating to its work, together with its Work Programme.

The outcome of this discussion was that nominations would be sought from members in relation to the two Task and Finish Groups that will examine matters relating to Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Issues in order that work can begin early in the autumn. That a six monthly progress report should come to the Panel on the outcomes of the recommendations of last year's Neighbourhood Working Task and Finish Group and that three members of the Panel be appointed to represent the City Council on the Joint Scrutiny Panel of the Carlisle and Eden Crime, Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Councillor O. Luckley,
Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.