

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2011 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Rutherford (Chairman), Councillors Bowditch, Craig, Mrs Farmer, McDevitt, Mrs Robson, Mrs Vasey and Watson

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Bloxham – Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Bowman – Economic Development Portfolio Holder

EEOSP.60/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Mr Crossley, Strategic Director.

EEOSP.61/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McDevitt declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.3 Car Parking Task and Finish Group. The interest related to the fact that he was a Member of Cumbria County Council.

Councillor Mrs Robson declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.3 Car Parking Task and Finish Group. The interest related to the fact that she was a Member of Cumbria County Council.

Councillor Watson declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.3 Car Parking Task and Finish Group. The interest related to the fact that he was a Member of Cumbria County Council.

EEOSP.62/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meetings held on 8 September 2011 be noted.

EEOSP.63/11 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

There were no matters that had been the subject of call in.

EEOSP.64/11 OVERVIEW REPORT INCORPORATING THE WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.27/11 which provided an overview of matters related to the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny

Panel's work. Details of the latest version of the work programme were also included.

Mrs Edwards reported that:

- The Forward Plan of the Executive covering the period 1 October 2011 to 31 January 2012 had been published on 16 September 2011. Ms Edwards advised that:
 - KD.022/11 – Botchergate Conservation Area Appraisal would be discussed at this meeting.
 - KD.024/11 – Budget Process 2012-13 would be available for consideration on 1 December 2011

- The Enterprise Centre Task and Finish Group had visited the Enterprise Centre on 15 September 2011 and taken a tour of the Centre and talked to a number of the tenants. A witness session had been arranged for 12 October 2011 with officers from Development Control, Property and Economic Development as well as the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Craig, Lead Member of the Enterprise Centre Task and Finish Group, raised concerns that the next stage of the Transformation Programme included savings of £40,000 from the Enterprise Centre.

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) (Ms Meek) explained that the review of the Enterprise Centre had to be completed before any decisions were made regarding potential savings.

- Members had expressed a wish to hold a workshop on the relationship between the economy and education, skills and training. The workshop had initially been arranged for 7 November 2011 and how now been rearranged for the afternoon of 15 November 2011.

- A Budget Workshop had been arranged for Scrutiny Members to take place on 11 November 2011. Members of SMT and the Executive had been invited to the workshop and Members were encouraged to attend as discussion and content would assist in involving scrutiny members further in the budget setting process

- The next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Group had been scheduled for 2 November and Members were asked to notify the Chair of the Panel or the Scrutiny Officer of any items to be discussed.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel be noted.

EEOSP.65/11 CAR PARKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Mrs Culleton) submitted report LE.24/11 which provided an update on the implementation of the recommendations from the Car Parking Task and Finish Group.

The report outlined the progress on each of the seven recommendations made by the Car Parking Task and Finish Group and contained a copy of the study brief for the Car Parking Study which was being undertaken. The Study would be used to advise the Charges Budget Process and management policies.

The Panel raised concerns that an external consultant had been appointed to carry out the Car Parking Study. The Car Parking Task and Finish Group had made several recommendations, many of which had been included in the Study Brief. They were disappointed that the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group had not been implemented and felt that the Study could have been undertaken internally using all the existing pieces of work carried out in the past.

Mrs Culleton responded that she had taken the decision to use a consultant in response to a request from the management team to look at car parking in the City. She added that the recommendations of the Task Group had been included in the brief along side information taken from Pay and Display machines as a foundation for the Study. She felt that the Study was the next step to ensure that the Task Group recommendations were implemented.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder understood the Panel's frustration that the issue was still ongoing and explained that the issue had been delayed to consider Parking Connect. Now that Parking Connect would not be going forward it was time to look at car parking in a new way as the current target for income and actual income was mismatched. The Task Group had highlighted a number of options and car parking needed to be considered as a whole. The consultant that was being used had undertaken the work for Parking Connect and understood the Council's need and it was felt that his background knowledge and experience nationally would help maximise the recommendations made by the Task Group and the review of car parking.

A Member commented that car parking in Carlisle was a difficult issue as it was the responsibility of two authorities and the Police. He raised concerns about the delay in a review of car parking and stressed the need to ensure that any changes to car parking were not to the detriment of the local community, businesses or tourism.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that the Council did need to be aware of the city centre and tourism economy. He added that the consultant had a number of ideas and was not only looking at income maximisation from car parks but also how they were designated and how they could be used better.

A Member informed the Panel that the Cumbria County Council Local Area Committee had set up a working group to look at residential parking schemes. They had created a new scheme which moved the car parking permits from each car to each household and there would be a charge for additional permits.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Local Area Committee had agreed a scheme but the County Council Cabinet had not approved the scheme as they wanted a County wide scheme not one for Carlisle.

The Chairman asked for confirmation that the Local Area Committee report had been given to the consultant as part of his background information.

Mrs Culleton agreed to pass the report onto to the consultant.

A Member asked, when the review of the disc parking zones was undertaken, if it was possible to leave zone signs in place in areas where the zone had been removed so that signs were in place if the zone was re-established at a future date.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder responded that the consultant would be able to answer Members questions and concerns when he came to the Panel.

A Member requested that the work already completed on car parking be collated and reviewed and included in the report in the report for monitoring purposes.

RESOLVED: 1) That the update on the Car Parking Task & Finish Group recommendations be welcomed;

2.) That a special meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel be convened to consider the consultants draft report when it was available.

EEOSP.66/11 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) (Mrs Meek) submitted report ED.36/11 which briefed Members on the next phase of the transformation programme for the Economic Development Directorate.

Mrs Meek explained that the next stage of the programme would be a review that would investigate a number of issues in relation to Tourism and the Enterprise Centre.

The Tourism review would take in all of the Tourism Development and Support Services that were currently delivered by the City Council and outlined the timetable for the review.

The review of the Enterprise Centre would look at the role of the Centre and work with key partners to provide Start Up and Small/Medium Enterprise business space and support. She felt that the Panel's Task and Finish Group would ask more challenging questions and their work would feed into the broader review. She added that the Enterprise Centre required modernisation to ensure it met the requirements of tenants and encouraged new tenants and businesses.

In response to a Member's request Mrs Meek explained that the Economic Development Officer's role focused on business and business policy development. The Regeneration Officer's role brought together a range of knowledge and experience for project delivery. The Regeneration Officer would provide a strategic lead on projects and would be able to chair multi disciplinary teams. Mrs Meek confirmed that the Economic Development Officer had been appointed and consideration was being given to appointing an interim Regeneration Officer to support ongoing projects, this would allow time for the job description to be updated.

Councillor Craig, the Lead Member of the Enterprise Centre Task and Finish Group, commented that the work of the Task Group had been very interesting and they had a number of options that would be formed into recommendations. The options included a rebrand of the Enterprise Centre and some maintenance to the external building, a maintenance programme for the entire Centre, promotion of the Centre using the advertising budget and generation of income from energy suppliers.

The Task Group had met with building surveyors and understood that the building was in good condition but did require some cosmetic work. He explained that there were a number of options available to ensure that the Centre was sustainable and reminded the Panel that many of the existing tenants used the Centre because it was a managed well maintained workspace.

Mrs Meek confirmed that the results of the Task and Finish Group would be included in the review for the Enterprise Centre.

The Panel's other area of concern was the redevelopment of the Old Town Hall. There had been three options available for the Old Town Hall and the Council had agreed to a full refurbishment using Lottery money. Unfortunately the bid for funding had been unsuccessful and Members were concerned that the work on the Old Town Hall would not be considered as part of the capital projects.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder confirmed that there had been a small amount of funding received from English Heritage for some work at the Town Hall.

Mrs Meek agreed that the Old Town Hall was a very important building in the City and, as part of the review, the use of the building would be considered alongside how the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) was delivered. She added that the current TIC did not reflect a modern Centre or the needs of the customer. The review would look at TICs in other historic areas and how they delivered their service.

In response to a Member's question Mrs Meek confirmed that the Discover Carlisle website was active and consideration was being given to the development of the website and the opportunities that were available through it.

RESOLVED – 1) That the update on the Economic Development Transformation Programme be welcomed;

2) That the Executive give priority to the capital programme for the redevelopment of the Old Town Hall.

EEOSP.67/11 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME – LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Mrs Culleton) submitted Report LE.25/11 which provided an update on the latest staff consultation proposals which would deliver phase 2 of the Local Environment transformation. Mrs Culleton reminded Members of the first phase of the transformation programme and summarised the current position. She advised that reduced funding in Local Environment could result in a reduction in resources available to deliver some work programmes and that some discretionary services may need to stop altogether. To minimise the need for reductions in service a new approach of service review, Lean Systems Thinking, had been introduced.

Mrs Culleton reminded Members that Environment was one of the Council's two corporate priorities and she outlined the proposed approach to meet savings targets. The main priority for the year would be Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces and Bereavement Services and Mrs Culleton outline the areas of work that would be considered in a Lean Systems Review.

Mrs Culleton stated that Local Environment must refocus on priorities to minimise the impact of reducing resources on front line services that the public valued including the cleanliness of the streets, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour such as dog-fouling, fly-tipping and littering. The proposed development of a new team to address environmental crime and co-ordinate other enforcement and education activities would be key in meeting those priorities.

In Phase 2 Ms Culleton explained that it was proposed to move towards area based working for Streetscene and grounds maintenance work and it would be key to have strong community engagement in the new area teams through a range of community engagement mechanisms including neighbourhood Forums and Parish Council.

Mrs Culleton informed Members that the proposed changes would achieve savings of £300,000 by April 2012 and outlined where the savings would be made. Other transformation work would include a review of car parking charges, the introduction of a database to improve delivery of services for customers across local environment and the movement of stored equipment from Willowholme to Bousteads Grassing depot.

Mrs Culleton concluded by outlining the proposals for implementation and the next steps up to March 2012 and the proposed implementation of the staffing structure up to February 2012.

In considering the matter, Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member asked for clarification with regard to the delivery of CCTV.

Mrs Culleton responded that formal consultation had been carried out with key stakeholders to explain the financial position and consider proposals. From the

consultation and in partnership with the Police, key times of demand were identified. During those periods the CCTV would be monitored but the cameras would be in use continuously. When the cameras were not monitored the Police had access to the cameras and were able to control the cameras remotely when required. The new service had been live since July 2011.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder commented that he had previously had concerns about the reduction in staff for CCTV but was reassured by the ability of the Police to remotely access the cameras. He had additional reassurance from the rise in CCTV use by businesses and premises throughout the City.

A Member asked what reservations Officers or the Portfolio Holder had regarding the changes to the delivery of CCTV.

Mrs Culleton responded that the major risk in the reduction on staff was that there would be an incident when no one was watching the cameras. This risk had been mitigated by the ability of the Police to access the cameras remotely. She stressed that the cameras were switched on at all times.

- A Member asked that consideration be given to the contract with Carlisle Leisure Limited for the maintenance of St James Park when the review of play areas was carried out.

Mrs Culleton confirmed that the review would look at the contract and would identify what was required in the short and long term.

- Which discretionary services would be considered as part of the Transformation?

Mrs Culleton responded that CCTV was one of the discretionary services. One service that would be looked at was open spaces, the Council was keen to continue to provide the service but look at ways of reducing costs by using options such as sustainable planting.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder reminded the Panel that Michael Gardner had left the authority. Mr Gardner had worked for the Council for 21 years and was the Waste Services Manager. He had been involved in the recycling and waste initiatives used by the authority. The Portfolio Holder thanked Mr Gardner for the work he had undertaken and praised his dedication and forward thinking.

RESOLVED – 1) That the update on the Local Environment Transformation Programme be welcomed;

2.) That a letter of appreciation and thanks be sent to Mr Gardner on behalf of the Panel.

EEOSP.68/11 BOTCHERGATE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN (DRAFT)

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) (Mrs Meek) submitted report ED.35/11 and advised that the Executive had considered the draft Botchergate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan at their meeting on 26 September 2011 (EX.123/11).

The Executive had decided:

“1. That the Executive had considered Report ED.30/11 concerning the draft Botchergate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and made the papers available for consideration by the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

2. That, subject to any additional information arising from the Scrutiny Panel, the matter be reported back to the Executive on 31 October 2011 to consider referral to Council for approval for public consultation on 8 November 2011.”

Mrs Meek advised Members of the purpose of the Botchergate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and stated that the current appearance of Botchergate was an issue of perennial concern for both elected Members and the public. Policy DP2 of the Local Plan (regeneration) specified that proposals would be developed for the regeneration of the economic, social and environmental capital of the district. Botchergate was named under the policy and the Botchergate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was the first step in taking forward the objectives of the policy by providing more detail to guide future development of the area, and to support private investment. The Conservation Area was centred on the linear strip of Botchergate, being also the key southern approach to the City.

Mrs Meek further advised that the appraisal included a recommendation to modify the boundary and therefore proposed consultation on that matter. She outlined the areas where alteration to the boundary was proposed.

The Heritage Officer (Mr Higgins) took the Panel through appendices in the report and explained the proposed changes.

The Panel thanked officers for the detailed report and requested that consideration be given to moving the proposed boundary to Collier Street so that everything on the right hand side of Collier Street was inside the conservation area.

A Member asked that the wording in the report be clarified to make it clear what the conservation area protected in Botchergate.

RESOLVED - That the proposed boundary be moved to include all of the buildings on the right hand side of Collier Street.

(The meeting ended at 12.00pm)