

# AGENDA

## Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 03 October 2013 AT 10:00  
In the Flensburg Room, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG

**\*\*Briefing meeting for Members will be at 9.15 am in the  
Flensburg Room\*\***

### Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitutions.

### Declarations of Interest

Members are invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and any interests, relating to any item on the agenda at this stage.

### Public and Press

To agree that the items of business within Part A of the agenda should be dealt with in public and that the items of business within Part B of the agenda should be dealt with in private.

### MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

5 - 12

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20 June 2013 and 11 July 2013  
[Copy Minutes in Minute Book Vol 40(2)]

## **PART A**

### **To be considered when the Public and Press are present**

#### **A.1 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

To consider any matter which has been the subject of call-in.

#### **A.2 OVERVIEW REPORT INCORPORATING THE WORK PROGRAMME AND KEY DECISIONS RELEVANT TO THE PANEL** **13 - 20**

To consider a report providing an overview of matters related to the work of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, together with the latest version of the Work Programme and details of the Key Decision items relevant to this Panel as set out in the Notice of Executive Key Decisions.

(Copy Report OS.22/13 herewith)

#### **A.3 CARLISLE'S PLAY PROVISION** **21 - 38**

(Environment and Transport Portfolio)

The Director of Local Environment to submit a report describing the process for reviewing Carlisle City Council's provision of fixed play areas and seeking endorsement of the principles to be adopted in the review, The matter was included in the Notice of Key Decisions and was considered by the Executive on 30 September 2013.

(Copy Report CD.52/13 herewith and Minute Excerpt to follow)

#### **A.4 REVENUE AND BENEFITS SERVICE - WELFARE REFORM** **39 - 42**

(Communities and Housing Portfolio)

The Director of Community Engagement to submit a report on the discretionary assistance provided to housing benefit recipients affected by Welfare Reform.

(Copy Report CD.48/13 herewith)

**A.5 WELFARE ADVICE SERVICE**

**43 - 46**

(Communities and Housing Portfolio)

The Director of Community Engagement to submit a report detailing the cost and impact of the Welfare Advice Service.

(Copy Report CD.49/13 herewith)

**A.6 TRANSFORMATION UPDATE**

**47 - 50**

(Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio)

The Director of Community Engagement to submit a report that summarises the recent transformation changes made within the Community Services Directorate and provides an up to date structure chart and financial review.

(Copy Report CD.50/13 herewith)

**PART B**

**To be considered when the Public and Press are excluded from the meeting**

**Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Conservative** – Ellis, Mrs Prest (Vice Chairman), Mrs Vasey, Bainbridge (sub), Lishman (sub), Mrs Mallinson (sub)

**Labour** – Mrs Bradley, Scarborough, Miss Sherriff, Mrs Stevenson, Forrester (sub), Whalen (sub), Wilson (sub)

**Liberal Democrat** - Mrs Luckley, Allison (sub)

**Enquiries, requests for reports, background papers,  
etc to Committee Clerk: Sheila Norton - 817557**



**COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**THURSDAY 22 AUGUST 2013 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Luckley (Chairman) Councillors Ellis,  
Mrs Prest, Scarborough, Miss Sherriff, Mrs Stevenson, Mrs Vasey and  
Wilson

ALSO  
PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Martlew, Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive  
Director of Resources  
Environmental Health Manager  
Policy and Performance Officer  
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

**COSP.53/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There was an apology for absence submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Riddle,  
Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder.

**COSP.54/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in respect of the business to be transacted.

**COSP.55/13 PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The Panel agreed that Report LE.25/13 – CCTV Update – would be considered in the  
public part of the meeting as the issues therein were no longer confidential.

**COSP.56/13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2013 be noted.

**COSP.57/13 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

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

**COSP.58/13 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.19/13 which provided an overview of matters  
relating to the work of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and included the latest  
version of the work programme and Key Decisions of the Executive which related to the  
Panel.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that:

- The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 2 August 2013. The  
following issues fell within the remit of this Panel:

KD.018/13 – Play Area Review – the matter was due to be considered by the Panel at  
the meeting but had been deferred from the Executive meeting on 30 September 2013.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that the review was ongoing and that a report would be submitted to the Panel prior to consideration at a future meeting of the Executive.

KD.021/13 – Application to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for Healthy City Status (Phase VI) – The Executive will be asked to approve the Council making an application for WHO Healthy City Status (Phase VI) at their meeting on 30 September 2013. The Deputy Chief Executive explained the background to the application and confirmed that he would circulate a copy to Members of the Panel.

- The following Minute Excerpts had been received from the Executive's meeting held on 5 August 2013:

EX.93/13 – Representatives on Outside Bodies

EX.84/13 – Arts Centre Development – the addendum to Executive Report CD.37/13 was attached for information at the request of the Chair of the Panel.

- Task Groups
  - Customer Access Strategy Task Group – the Task Group had met with the Director of Community Engagement and the Customer Services Manager on 2 August 2013. A briefing note summarising the discussion was attached as an appendix and Members were asked to note the progress made on the Strategy and agree the suggested way forward for the Task Group. A member of the Task Group stated that the Customer Contact Centre was very impressive and staff were enthusiastic.
  - Hate Crime Task Group – The Task Group held their initial meeting on 6 August 2013 to determine their Terms of Reference and scope the review. A copy of the Terms of Reference was tabled at the meeting.
- Work Programme – The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the current work programme and advised that a report in respect of Revenues and Benefits would be submitted for consideration at the meeting scheduled for October. The report would look at the performance of the service, the impact of the Welfare Reform Act and the progress of the Benefits Advisory Service.

The Director of Resources advised that Officers were required to state whether the Council would continue with the Localisation of Council Tax scheme in its present format or amend it. Due to time constraints it would be unlikely that the scheme would be amended in the current year.

The Director explained that the revenue costs of the scheme had been funded by technical changes within the budget such as empty properties project.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key decisions relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That the Deputy Chief Executive would circulate a copy of the application to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for Healthy City Status (Phase VI) to members of the Panel.

3) That a report in respect of the Revenues and Benefits Service be added to the work programme for the meeting scheduled for October 2013.

## **COSP.59/13 QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013-14**

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted report PC.14/13 that updated the Panel on the Council's service standards that helped measure performance and customer satisfaction, and included updates on key actions contained within the Carlisle Plan.

From Autumn 2013 a new service standard would be introduced, Customer Satisfaction with Environmental Services, that would be measured from customer feedback from the website and through the Carlisle Focus magazine readers' survey.

With regard to the information on the Carlisle Plan the intention was to provide the Panel with a brief overview of the current position without duplicating the more detailed reporting that had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels at earlier meetings.

The Policy and Performance Officer explained that in future only Service Standards that were relevant to the Panel would be included in the quarterly report.

The Director of Resources advised that last year the average number of days to process new benefits claims was 24 days. The current report indicated that the average figure was now 18 with the figure for July 2013 being 16.8 days which put the City Council within the top quartile.

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

- *Was the Service Standard benchmarked against other authorities?*

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that he did not have that information to hand but would find out and feed that information into the next report.

- *Was the number of days taken to process claims the only difference in the reporting of the Service Standard?*

The Director of Resources advised that the figure indicated an average of how many claims had been processed over a number of days. He explained that some claims could take up to 22 days when dealing with people in hard to reach groups.

- *A Member stated that the Service Standard was a dramatic improvement on previous figures.*
- *With regard to the Customer Contact Centre how many people used the application on the Council's website? The Member had looked at the applications and found them to be wordy and bureaucratic.*

The Director of Resources stated that it was still early days in respect of people using the Council's website to access application forms and that there were not so many people claiming Housing Benefits who would have access to the internet. Triage staff in the Customer Contact Centre would be available to help people complete forms online when they visited the Civic Centre. Although the forms could be completed on line there was still a requirement for them to be signed by the applicant.

The Policy and Performance Officer confirmed that he would pass on the comments regarding the website to the relevant personnel.

- *Would the Director of Resources ensure that the report would include special housing payments?*

The Director of Resources agreed that it would be useful to look at that area of the work of the service.

- *Had Officers looked at other authorities to compare their figures against those of the City Council?*

The Director of Resources explained that the City Council produced their own figures as there was no longer a requirement to maintain statistics for the Government.

- *There had been an impressive improvement in performance in Revenues and Benefits. Had there been extra pressure on staff to achieve those improvements?*

The Director of Resources advised that the improvement was due in part to improved IT systems as well as the work of Officers in the Customer Contact Centre.

- *With regard to the Carlisle Plan would there be enquiries in respect of the Arts Centre, sports, health and wellbeing and Children's Trust?*

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that that detail would be included elsewhere and Officers were working with Directors to provide updates. Issues were scrutinised by other groups such as the Corporate Project Board and a report would be submitted to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- *Was the cycle ramp at Willowholme on track?*

The Director of Resources advised that the project had gone out to tender and the first responses had been received but it was still too early to update Members on progress.

- *The Old Town Hall is looking brilliant after the refurbishment and thanks should be passed to the staff involved.*

In response to a query from a Member of the Panel the Director of Resources agreed to provide a written response in respect of funding for the Homelife Carlisle project.

- *What progress had been made on the gypsy and traveller transit site?*

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the information would be included in the report that would be submitted to the Panel at their meeting in October.

- *The Empty Homes Project had made a real difference. Would further funding be available?*

The Director of Resources advised that Officers had applied for as much funding as was available this year and would apply for further funding when the new allocations were available.

RESOLVED: 1) That Report PC.14/13 – Quarter One Performance Report 2013-14 be noted.



2) That the Director of Resources to provide a written response in respect of funding for the Homelife Carlisle project.

3) That information in respect of the gypsy and traveller transit site to be included in the report to be submitted to the Panel at their meeting in October.

### **COSP.60/13 CCTV UPDATE**

The Environmental Health Manager presented report LE.25/13 that informed the Panel on the current position of the City Council's public CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) system. The report included the impact of the recent changes to the system and detailed the negotiations that were, and had been, taking place with other agencies.

The Environmental Health Manager explained the background to the system, the current arrangements for monitoring the cameras and the future arrangements following the expiration of the BT fibre optic contract.

A comprehensive consultation exercise had been conducted between November 2012 and January 2013 on the proposed reduction of the Council's public CCTV system. Publicity for the proposed changes had occurred in the local media and prior to confirming its proposal the City Council directly sought the views of Cumbria Constabulary, Carlisle and Eden Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Riverside, The Lanes Shopping Centres, Retailers Against Crime and Pub Watch. The outcome of those negotiations was included within the report.

Negotiations had taken place with the Police and the Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Environmental Health Manager advised the Panel of the impact of the changes including the requirement of new policies and procedures to ensure data protection and freedom of information obligations were met. The Council was liaising with the Police regarding those changes.

The Council retained within its budget finance for maintenance, repair and decommissioning. A new maintenance contract had been awarded and the Council were working with the new contractor to repair and future proof the system. Faults on the cameras would be notified by the Police or picked up on weekly checks.

The Environmental Health Manager believed that the next few months would be challenging but the Council was pleased with the performance of its new maintenance contractor and new policies and working practices were being put in place to manage the change process and meet the Council's legal obligations.

One of the outcomes of the changes in policy had been the need to look at the purpose of the CCTV system. Within the City Council the cameras were now monitored by Officers at their desks and the Council's Keepers and car parking officers also had access to the system. The main issue for the police was crime and disorder and the Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder had met with the Police Commissioner to discuss the matter.

The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that the City Council was committed to the maintenance of the 9 cameras to be retained by the Council.

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

- *When is a response expected from the Police Commissioner?*

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder advised that she had had long discussions on police input into CCTV and discussed the recommendations with the Acting Chief Constable who was looking at a county wide solution. The Portfolio Holder had received a response from the Police Commissioner who had confirmed that the police were looking at a county wide service.

- *The report stated that from June 2013 the City Council was unable to immediately respond to requests for images. Why was that?*

The Environmental Health Manager explained that previously there had been someone in the control room at all times. Now there was no-one whose time was fully allocated to CCTV. However, the Environmental Health Manager reminded Members that the police had the facility to view images at the Police station at Durranshill and there was also a link to the Police station at Penrith. All images were retained for 28 days.

The Environmental Health Manager further explained that an officer checked that the cameras were functioning on a weekly basis. The cameras had been maintained more regularly than had initially been agreed to make any handover to the Police an easier transition. However, the budget would be tighter next year so it would not be possible to maintain those cameras.

- *A private security company had expressed an interest in monitoring the cameras for free. Would it be possible for someone to do that in the future?*

The Environmental Health Manager advised that images from the cameras were currently the responsibility of the City Council and if they were used inappropriately the Council could be held responsible. There were several issues to be taken into account in respect of allowing a 3<sup>rd</sup> party access to the images and the sensitive information they contained. The Officer was not aware of any other authority using 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for the monitoring of data.

- *An article in the press had stated that Carlisle had the second safest car parks in the country.*

The Portfolio Holder was pleased with that report and believed that it was related to the provision of the CCTV system.

- *What was the current situation in respect of the five redeployable CCTV cameras funded by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership?*

The Environmental Health Manager advised that one was maintained by the City Council and the remaining four by the Carlisle Strategic Partnership (CSP). Since the responsibility for the highways had passed to the County Council there was now a cost implication in the use of the cameras on street lights. The CSP, through the “accountable body” Eden District Council, cover the costs for the redeployable cameras.

- *Had there been any impact in not monitoring the cameras at all times?*

The Environmental Health Manager advised that there had been no issues and that the images had been available.

The Portfolio Holder advised that discussions with the police had been positive and they had acknowledged that the cameras were an essential police tool. Since April there had been 80 hours of evidence used by the police in comparison to 2 requests per week from insurance companies.

- *Were all of the cameras being maintained at present?*

The Environmental Health Manager explained the City Council had a contract to maintain some cameras but had used the carry forward money to maintain other cameras to assist the Police and help with any future transfers. Cameras used most often were the ones that needed most maintenance.

- *A Member was surprised that the police were taking so long to make a decision on the CCTV system.*
- *Had there been any increase in crime rates where CCTV coverage had ceased? And how did that compare to other authorities?*

The Environmental Health Manager and the Portfolio Holder advised that as the system was still operating they were unable to comment on the increase in crime in Carlisle without the cameras. The Environmental Health Manager and the Portfolio Holder were unaware of the impact on crime in those authorities such as Eden and Allerdale, who had switched off their cameras. Crime generally was falling in Carlisle.

- *As CCTV was within the police jurisdiction the onus was on them to take on the monitoring of the CCTV system.*

The Environmental Health Manager advised that he was the Council's representative on the Violence and Crime Task Group on the CSP which had determined that crime figures were falling.

RESOLVED: That Report LE.25/13 – CCTV Update be noted.

(The meeting ended at 11:00am)



# Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item:

**A.2**

Meeting Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013  
 Portfolio: Cross Cutting  
 Key Decision: No  
 Within Policy and Budget Framework  
 Public / Private Public

Title: OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME  
 Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer  
 Report Number: OS 22/13

**Summary:**

This report provides an overview of matters related to the Community O&S Panel's work. It also includes the latest version of the work programme.

**Recommendations:**

Members are asked to:

- Decide whether the items on the Notice of Key Executive Decisions should be included in the Panel's Work Programme for consideration.
- Note and/or amend the Panel's work programme

**Tracking**

Executive:	<b>Not applicable</b>
Overview and Scrutiny:	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013</b>
Council:	<b>Not applicable</b>

### **1. Notice of Key Executive Decisions**

The most recent Notice of Key Executive Decisions was published on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2013. The following issues fall into the remit of this Panel and full details are attached at **Appendix 1**:

**KD.018/13 Play Area Review**– on the agenda for this meeting.

**KD.021/13 Application to World Health Organisation (WHO) for Healthy City Status (Phase VI)** - The Executive will be asked to approve the Council making an application for WHO Healthy City Status (Phase VI) at their meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013. Members of the Panel agreed at their last meeting that they did not require the report for scrutiny.

### **2. References from the Executive**

There are no references from the Executive meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2013 which fall into the remit of this panel.

### **3. Work Programme**

The Panel's current work programme is attached at **Appendix 2** for comment/amendment. The Panel held a work programming session on the rise of their last meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> May and the work programme has been amended to reflect the outcomes of that session.

**Contact Officer:** Nicola Edwards **Ext:** 7122

**Appendices attached to report:**

- 1. Notice of Key Decision**
- 2. Community O&S Work Programme 2013/14**

**Note:** in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

Items relevant to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

**Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive**

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.018/13
Decision Title:	Carlisle's Play Provision
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to decide on which option, identified in the review, to implement. This could mean a change of use to informal play space or football mini pitches in the appropriate locations.
Date Decision to be considered:	
Date Decision to be taken:	30 September 2013
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Director of Local Environment will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Director of Local Environment, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Environment and Transport (Councillor Mrs Martlew)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website [www.carlisle.gov.uk](http://www.carlisle.gov.uk).

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

Date last revised: 19 September 2013

Issue	Type of Scrutiny						Comments/status	Meeting Dates							
	Performance Management	Key Decisions Item/Referred from Executive	Policy Review/Development	Scrutiny of Partnership/ External Agency	Monitoring	Budget									
								30 May 13	11 Jul 13	22 Aug 13	3 Oct 13	14 Nov 13	9 Jan 14	13 Feb 14	27 Mar 14
<b>CURRENT MEETING – 3<sup>rd</sup> October</b>															
Carlisle's Play Provision Action Plan							To consider report detailing review of play pitches and to consider the options indentified.				✓				
Revenue & Benefits Services							Report detailing pressures and performance of service				✓				
Benefits Advice Service							Report detailing cost and impact of service				✓				
Localisation of Council Tax							Update on proposals for scheme 2014/15				✓				



# COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

Date last revised: 19 September 2013

Issue	Type of Scrutiny						Comments/status	Meeting Dates							
	Performance Management	Key Decisions Item/Referred from Executive	Policy Review/Development	Scrutiny of Partnership/ External Agency	Monitoring	Budget		30	11	22	3	14	9	13	27
								May	Jul	Aug	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb	Mar
							13	13	13	13	13	14	14	14	
Transformation					✓	✓				✓					
<b>TASK AND FINISH GROUPS</b>															
Hate Crime			✓							✓				✓	
Customer Access Strategy			✓							✓				✓	
Community Centres				✓								✓			
<b>FUTURE MEETINGS</b>															
Tullie House Trust												✓			

# COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

Date last revised: 19 September 2013

Issue	Type of Scrutiny						Comments/status	Meeting Dates							
	Performance Management	Key Decisions Item/Referred from Executive	Policy Review/Development	Scrutiny of Partnership/ External Agency	Monitoring	Budget		30	11	22	3	14	9	13	27
								May	Jul	Aug	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb	Mar
Performance Monitoring Reports	✓						13	13	13	13	13	14	14	14	
Riverside Carlisle				✓				✓					✓		
Arts Centre		✓						✓							
Budget 14/15 - 18/19		✓	✓							✓					
Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	✓		✓							?	?			✓	
Scrutiny Annual Report			✓		✓									✓	

# COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

Date last revised: 19 September 2013

Issue	Type of Scrutiny						Comments/status	Meeting Dates							
	Performance Management	Key Decisions Item/Referred from Executive	Policy Review/Development	Scrutiny of Partnership/ External Agency	Monitoring	Budget									
								30 May 13	11 Jul 13	22 Aug 13	3 Oct 13	14 Nov 13	9 Jan 14	13 Feb 14	27 Mar 14
<b>COMPLETED ITEMS</b>															
CCTV		✓				✓	To monitor any effects of the reduction of CCTV provision			✓					
Sports provision in the District			✓				Panel to be involved in study and to consider final report		✓						
Shaddongate Resource Centre					✓		Update on provision, services and financial plan	✓							
Regulatory Reform Order – Empty Property Policy Amendments		✓					Consideration of Executive Report	✓							



# Report to Community Overview & Scrutiny

Agenda  
Item:  
**A.3**

Meeting Date: 3 October 2013  
 Portfolio: Environment and Transport  
 Key Decision: Yes: Recorded in the Notice Ref:KD.018/13  
 Within Policy and Budget Framework YES  
 Public / Private Public

Title: CARLISLE'S PLAY PROVISION  
 Report of: The Director of Local Environment  
 Report Number: CD52/13

**Purpose / Summary:**

The report describes the process for reviewing Carlisle City Council's provision of fixed play areas and seeks endorsement of the principles to be adopted in the review.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny panel considers the methodology and principles used in the review of play areas (report ref LE29/13) and provides and comments or observations to the Executive.

**Tracking**

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

## **1. BACKGROUND**

**1.1** Carlisle City Council's portfolio of play spaces ranges from small areas of open space used for informal recreation to large, complex play areas with fixed equipment such as those found at Bitts Park, Hammonds Pond or Chances Park. The attached review and report aims to improve the quality of Carlisle's play facilities while maintaining accessibility to play space for every child. It also aims to ensure that all play spaces provide the appropriate level of play value and can be maintained in a safe condition with the resources available.

**1.2** The methodology and principles for decision-making on future management of play areas are contained in the main report.

**1.3** The results of the site surveys and the distribution map showing 500m radius for each play area are included as appendices.

## **2. OPTIONS**

**2.1** The 'do nothing' option is not sustainable. The staffing and maintenance budgets for play areas have both been cut by 50% in the past 2 years so it will be impossible to guarantee continued safe operation of our play areas without some changes.

**2.2** Increasing the resources available for play areas is unrealistic – as stated above the revenue budget has been halved and the capital budget has been removed altogether – there is no capital programme for investment in old and obsolete equipment.

**2.3** Endorsing the approach where play areas are maintained according to a set of agreed criteria will enable the Council to continue to provide the high quality of play equipment, accessible to all, as we go forward.

## **3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

**3.1** The review of play areas will help us to ensure the future safety and accessibility of Carlisle's play areas and the Panel is invited to consider the report and make comments for consideration by the Executive.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance –**

**Local Environment –**

**Resources -**

<b>Report to Executive</b>	<b>Agenda Item:</b>  <b>A.1</b>
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Meeting Date: 30th September 2013  
 Portfolio: Environment and Transport  
 Key Decision: Yes: Recorded in the Notice Ref:KD  
 Within Policy and Budget Framework YES  
 Public / Private Public

Title: CARLISLE'S PLAY PROVISION  
 Report of: The Director of Local Environment  
 Report Number: LE 29/13

**Purpose / Summary:**

The report describes the process for reviewing Carlisle City Council's provision of fixed play areas and seeks endorsement of the principles to be adopted in the review.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the Executive receives the report and refers it to the Community Overview and Scrutiny panel for consideration and comment.

**Tracking**

Executive:	<b>28/10/13</b>
Overview and Scrutiny:	<b>17/10/13</b>
Council:	



## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Safe spaces in which to play are a fundamental right for every child. Play is an important part of the learning and development process in children. It teaches them about the basic capabilities of their growing bodies – balance, hand-eye coordination, strength and stretching. During play, children learn how to take calculated risks and how to challenge themselves to extend their abilities.
- 1.2 Play takes many different forms and can be undertaken alone or as part of a group. Definitions of play vary, but often include the principle that it is not supervised by adults – children are free to express themselves in whatever activities or behaviours seem appropriate to them.
- 1.3 Children will find opportunities for play in almost any environment, natural or artificial. While there is evidence to suggest that the radius of movement (with home at the centre) has declined for modern children, there is no doubt that many of them are engaged in similar activities as their parents and grandparents – building dens, collecting conkers, climbing trees etc. However, evidence of declining levels of physical activity among young people is mirrored by increasing incidence of childhood obesity and a concurrent rise in solitary, indoor activities based around a screen. Many initiatives are underway to try and counter this trend which is recognised as a threat to the future health of a generation. One way is to make play spaces as interesting as possible for young people. Local authorities have traditionally provided dedicated spaces for play, equipped with a variety of apparatus designed to encourage children to challenge themselves and have fun.
- 1.4 In addressing the priorities set out in the Carlisle Plan, we shall also contribute to **Equality** (by ensuring that all areas of the City have access to high quality play areas); **Community Safety** (by working with others to create safe play environments, for example by tackling anti-social behaviour); **Environmental Enhancement** (by improving the quality and environment of play areas as part of our on-going programme of improvements to Carlisle's parks and green spaces); and **Accessibility and Social Inclusion** (by ensuring that play areas are accessible and useable by all children and young people).
- 1.5 The views, opinions and experience of children and young people should be central to the planning and design of the environments in which they play.

## **2. The Resource**

- 2.1** Carlisle City Council operates 69 play areas serving its population of 106,000. '*Play for Today, Play for Tomorrow*' was the City Council's Play Policy and Strategy for Children and Young People 2007 - 2012 and it is now time for the City Council to review its approach to play area management.
- 2.2** The intention will be to create a legacy of play facilities offering high play value in a safe environment, accessible to every child and allowing them to explore their individual abilities and learn to assess and overcome the risks inherent in physical challenge.
- 2.3** To do this successfully our proposed strategy is to focus on quality. A methodology is set out below by which an assessment can be made of the quality, play value and accessibility of each individual equipped play area. The outcome of the assessment will be used to determine the type, specification and maintenance requirements of each site in the future. These may be broadly characterised as
- 'Destination' sites – where the accessibility and play value combine to attract visitors from a wider catchment area ((2,000m)
  - 'Neighbourhood' sites – used by children and young people living in the vicinity (1,200m)
  - 'Local Play' – smaller areas that may have no formal equipment but are managed as spaces for free play by all age groups (500m)

The standard adopted will aim to ensure that every child has access to a high quality play area within 500 metres of their home.

- 2.4** In some instances existing play equipment is either obsolete or poorly located (or both) and is no longer providing a quality play experience. Application of the criteria will identify these sites and allow decisions to be made on how their future management can contribute to raising quality standards, the outcome of which could be that the equipment is removed and not replaced. The Green Spaces team has therefore conducted a review of our stock of equipped play areas during 2013.

## **3. Risk Assessment**

A brief analysis of risks associated with the current play area stock includes:

- Escalating costs of repairs and maintenance of out-dated equipment
- Low play value of obsolete equipment leads to lack of engagement of children and young people in active play

- Vandalism – associated costs and safety issues
- Insurance claims resulting from our inability to maintain high standards of safety on ageing equipment (financial and reputational risks)
- Staff resources at full capacity on inspections and repairs
- Limited resources for development and improvement of play areas

#### 4. **Play Areas Review - Aim and Outcomes**

**Aim:** *Carlisle will be a child-friendly city where all children and young people have access to play opportunities in a range of different settings which offer variety, adventure and challenges. They will be able to play freely and safely and make choices about where, how and when they play.*

**Outcomes:** *This play area review focuses upon delivering two priority outcomes:*

- *Children are more physically active, emotionally resilient and are able to experience, judge and manage risk.*
- *Good quality and varied play spaces are widely available to children and young people in Carlisle.*

#### 5. **Review Methodology**

The review will be undertaken in 3 parts:

- Desk Study – examination of our records, files, inspection sheets, and annual RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) reports and risk assessments to get an understanding of the age and condition of each play area.
- Site audit – visit every play area to get an understanding of its location, siting, appearance and evidence of usage levels.
- Mapping – using GIS to map the access radius and status of each play area in order to present the results of 1 and 2 (above) in a way that is easy to visualise and comprehend.

#### 6. **Criteria**

The criteria by which the assessment is undertaken includes the following:

- **Play Value**  
RoSPA use a scoring system against a range of criteria in order to assess 'play value'. Depending upon their total score, play areas are categorised as being 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Average' etc. In practice, the approach means that 'Average' will be in excess of the national average for existing play areas.
- **Play Space Access Standard**

Residents should have access to at least **one** of the following:

- A play space of 'Average' play value within 500 metres walking distance
- A play space of 'Good' play value within 1200 metres walking distance
- A play space of 'Excellent' play value within 2000 metres walking distance

NB. All play areas will be high quality – 'play value' is a specific measure of the range and type of equipment present.

*(Adapted from a similar system used by Edinburgh City Council and based on the RoSPA 'play value' criteria)*

## **7. Conclusions**

The review of play provision in Carlisle is timely and will ensure that the highest standards can be maintained at all times. For the first time the City Council has set out the criteria for assessment and by which our play areas will be measured. As a result the community will be assured that the quality of provision is the best it can be.

## **8. Analysis**

In producing this review we have combined the following analyses:

- i. An audit of all known play areas in the city and district, produced for the City Council by RoSPA, following their 'Playsafe' approach which includes assessing each play area in terms of its age-group provision, age, play value, condition and safety; and
- ii. A spatial analysis, encompassing access to play areas, based upon the agreed access standard.

*(Note that the analysis only covers City Council owned and operated sites)*

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That the Executive receives the report and refers it to the Community Overview and Scrutiny panel for consideration and comment.

## **10.0 CONSULTATION**

**10.1** No external consultation has been undertaken up to this point. Ward Councillors, 'Friends' of Parks and residents groups (where appropriate) will be consulted as the review moves to its action phases.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**11.1** Raising the standards of our children's play facilities will contribute to a number of 'Carlisle Plan' objectives and will also have an impact on wider social issues such as health and physical activity of young people. We believe the Play Provision Review is an important step towards these better standards.

## **12.0 CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

***Aim 1: Develop vibrant sports, arts and cultural facilities, showcasing the City of Carlisle.*** The provision of fixed play equipment allows young people to develop balance, strength and hand-eye coordination, giving them skills they can use in a number of sports and outdoor activities elsewhere. High standard play areas provide challenges to help children measure their own capabilities and assess risks inherent in climbing, balancing and swinging.

***Aim 4: Support growth by ensuring a high quality environment which is attractive to new businesses and residents.*** Facilities for children's play close to where they live is a factor in determining the attractiveness of an area for residents - play areas on well established residential areas need to be kept at the highest possible standard in order to remain as an asset to residents and the children who live nearby. New developments will normally have play areas included as part of the planning process and where the provision can only be made off-site the Council will seek developer contributions to improve the standard of existing play areas.

**Contact Officer: Angela Culleton**

**Ext: 7325**

**Appendices  
attached to report:**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None**

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

### **Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement** – The principles for playground assessment proposed here are wholly appropriate. In keeping with good practice in developing sports and active recreation, the application of these principles will promote access to good quality play opportunity and enhance healthy and active lifestyles.

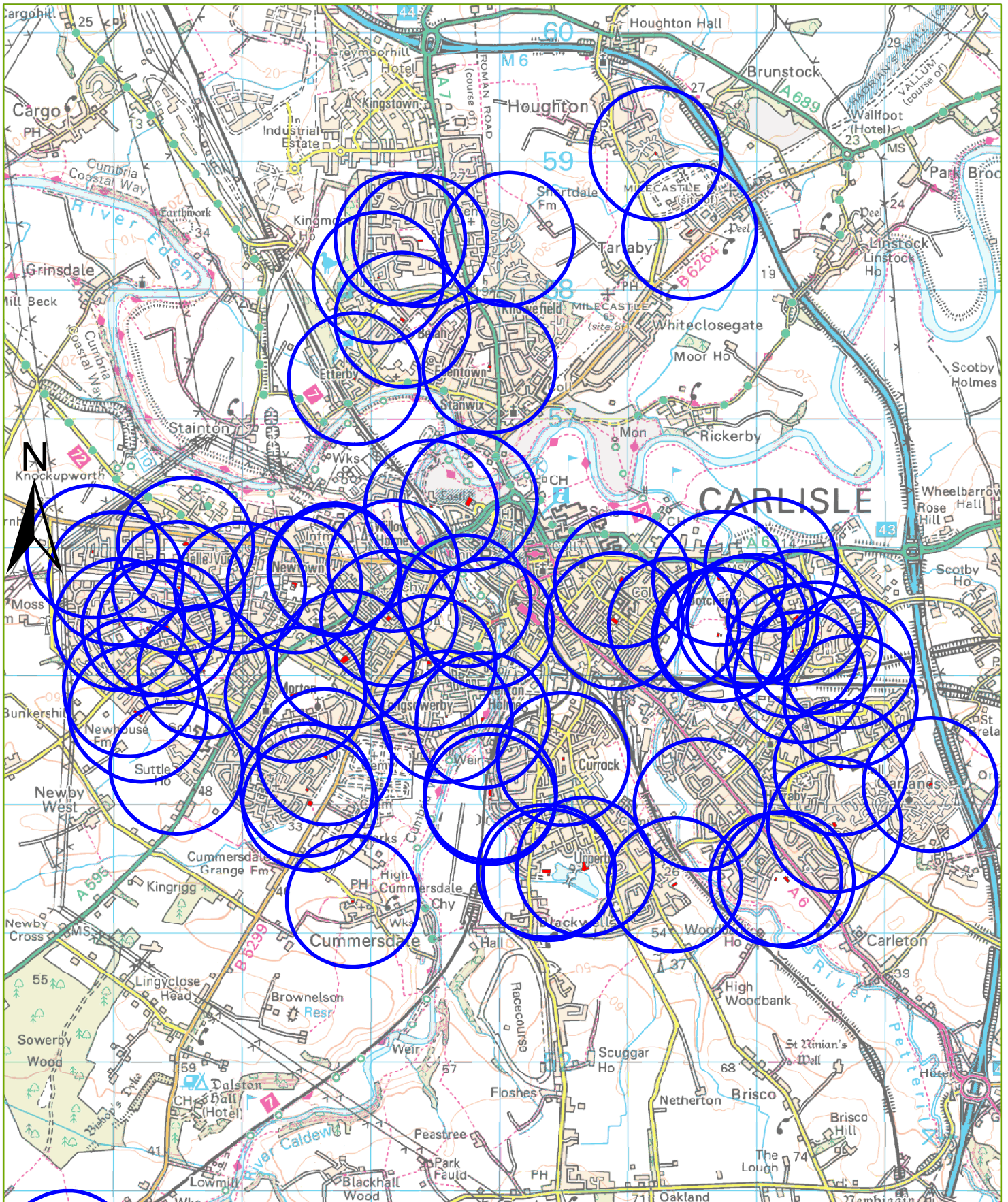
### **Economic Development –**

**Governance** – The Council has a responsibility to manage its assets and ensure that those using its play areas (whether by invitation or trespass) are reasonably safe. The proposals in this Report are about ensuring the best management etc of the Council's play assets.

### **Local Environment –**

**Resources** - This review of the Council's play provision will be undertaken by existing staff and within existing base budgets.





**Play Area existing locations**

**500m buffer**

Scale: 1:40000

Date: 05/07/2013

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**CARLISLE**  
 CITY COUNCIL



www.carlisle.gov.uk

**Civic Centre**  
**Rickergate**  
**Carlisle**  
**CA3 8QG**

		<u>Equipment:</u>	<u>Equipment Condition:</u>	<u>Surfacing:</u>	<u>Surfacing Condition:</u>	<u>Furniture:</u>	<u>Furniture Condition:</u>	<u>Estimated Usage:</u>
1	<b>Sheffield Street</b>	2 swings (2 cradles) 1 rocker 1 roundabout	Average	Bark	Poor	2 benches 1 bin	Poor	Low
2	<b>Milbourne Street</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 climber (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers	Average	Bark	Good	Fencing 1 self closing gate 1 bench	Average	Low—Medium
3	<b>Bitts Park, Dacre Road</b>	4 swings (2 baskets/2 flats/4 cradles) 2 climbers 4 MPU's (+ 1 net climber/2 slides) 4 rockers 2 spinners 2 water features 1 sand pit 2 play panels 1 willow tunnel	Good—Excellent	Wetpour Sand Grass	Good	Fencing 2 self closing gates 10 seats 6 bins	Good	High
4	<b>Toronto Street, Currock</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 climber	Average	Bark	Good	1 bin	Excellent	Low
5	<b>Lund Crescent, Jubilee Road, Currock</b>	2 swings (4 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 3 rockers	Average	Bark Wetpour	Average	Fencing 1 self closing gate	Average	Low-Medium
6	<b>Upperby Senior Hammonds Pond</b>	1 games wall 1 basketball hoop	Good	Tarmac	Good	3 seats	Good	Medium
7	<b>Upperby Junior Hammonds Pond</b>	3 swings (4 flats/2 cradles/1 basket) 1 rotating swing 4 MPUs (+ 3 slides/1 net climber) 1 slide 3 climbers 1 rocker 1 roundabout 1 spinner 1 aerial runway	Good	Bark Enviromulch Grass pack	Good	Fencing 2 self closing gates 6 seats 4 bins	Good	High
8	<b>Cammock Crescent Upperby</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 2 rockers	Good	Wetpour	Good			Low-Medium
9	<b>Denton Street Denton Holme</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 cantilever 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 playhouse (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers 1 roundabout	Good	Wetpour	Average	Fencing 2 gates 2 benches 1 bin	Average	Medium
10	<b>New Mills Denton Holme</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 rocker	Average	Rubber tiles Wetpour	Poor—Excellent	Fencing 1 self closing gate 1 seat 1 bin	Average	Low



		<u>Equipment</u> <u>Condition:</u>	<u>Surfacing:</u>	<u>Surfacing</u> <u>Condition:</u>	<u>Furniture:</u>	<u>Furniture Condition:</u>	<u>Estimated Usage:</u>	
11	<b>St James' Park Denton Holme</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 climber 1 playhouse 1 slide 1 seesaw 1 rocker 1 roundabout 3 balance steps 1 cycle track	Good	Wetpour Grass matting	Good	Fencing 1 self closing gate 4 benches 1 bin	Good	Medium
12	<b>Borrowdale Road Morton</b>	2 swings (4 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide)	Average	Bark Wetpour	Average	Fencing 1 gate	Average	Low
13	<b>Morton Park Chances Park</b>	2 swings (4 cradles) 1 cantilever 1 adventure trail 2 MPUs (+ 2 slides) 2 climbers 1 net climber 1 rocker 1 spinner 1 rotating swing 1 aerial runway	Average—Excellent	Bark Wetpour Grass matting	Average—Good	Fencing 3 self closing gates 4 benches	Good	High
14	<b>Raiselands Road Morton</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 adventure trail 1 MPU (+ 1 slide)	Average	Bark	Good	1 bin	Average	Low-Medium
15	<b>The Beeches Morton</b>	2 swings (4 flats/4 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers 1 games wall 1 basketball hoop	Good	Wetpour	Good	Fencing 1 gate 2 benches 1 bin	Good	Low-Medium
16	<b>St Edmunds' Park Orton Road</b>	1 swing (1 flat/1 cradle) 1 climber (+1 slide)	Average	Bark	Poor	Fencing 1 bench	Excellent	Low
17	<b>Yewdale Road Yewdale Park</b>	1 swing ( 2 cradles) 1 X-Scales 1 MPU (+1 slide) 1 climber 2 rockers 1 roundabout 1 spinner	Average	Bark	Average	Fencing 2 self closing gates 2 benches	Good	Medium
18	<b>Coniston Way Yewdale</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles)	Average	Bark	Good	Fencing 1 gate 1 bench	Average	Low
19	<b>Morton West Richmond Green</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 cantilever 1 climber (+ 3 net climbers) 1 slide 1 rocker 1 spinner	Excellent	Wood Chip	Good	Fencing 2 self closing gates 2 seats	Good	Medium

		<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Condition:</u>	<u>Surfacing:</u>	<u>Condition:</u>	<u>Furniture:</u>	<u>Condition:</u>	<u>Estimated Usage:</u>
20	<b>Trinity Caldewgate</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers 1 spinner 2 goal posts	Excellent	Grass matting	Good	Fencing 2 self closing gates 2 benches 1 bin	Good	Medium
21	<b>Peel Street Raffles</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 1 climber 1 rocker	Average	Bark	Good	Fencing 2 self closing gates 2 benches	Poor	Low-Medium
22	<b>Turnstone Park Newtown Road</b>	1 swing (2 cradles/1 basket) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 2 rockers 1 spinner 1 OXO panel	Good	Wetpour	Good	Fencing 3 self closing gates 1 bench 1 bin	Good	Low—Medium
23	<b>Beaver Road Spider Park</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 cantilever 1 adventure trail 1 MPU (+1 slide/1 net climber) 1 climber (+ 2 spinners) 2 rockers 1 roundabout 1 games wall 1 basketball hoop	Good	Wetpour Grass	Good	1 bench 1 bin	Good	Low-Medium
24	<b>Acredale Road Belle Vue</b>	3 swings (2 flats/2 cradles/1 basket) 2 MPUs (+ 2 slides/2 net climbers) 1 climber 4 rockers 1 roundabout 4 spinners 1 aerial runway 1 play panel 1 skater 11 gym equipment	Excellent	Grass matting	Good	7 seats 2 bins 3 gates	Good	Low-Medium
25	<b>Heysham Park Raffles</b>	1 swing (1 basket) 1 MPU (+1 slide) 1 climber 1 rocker 1 roundabout 1 spinner	Good	Grass matting	Good	1 seat 1 bin	Excellent	Medium
26	<b>Raffles Community Centre Raffles Avenue</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 adventure trail (+ 1 net climber) 1 spinner 1 aerial runway	Poor—Good	Bark	Good	Fencing 2 gates	Average	Low—Medium
27	<b>Heysham Park Extension Green Lane</b>	2 swings (1 basket/2 cradles) 1 rotating swing 1 climber 1 slide 1 rocker	Excellent	Grass matting	Good			Low

		<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Condition:</u>	<u>Surfacing:</u>	<u>Surfacing</u>	<u>Condition:</u>	<u>Furniture:</u>	<u>Furniture Condition:</u>	<u>Estimated Usage:</u>
28	<b>Chesterholme Yewdale</b>	1 swing (1 cradle) 1 rocker	Average	Bark	Poor				Low
29	<b>Summerfields Dalston</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 rocker	Average	Rubber tiles	Poor	2 seats 1 bin Fencing 1 self closing gate	Average		Low
30	<b>Cummersdale</b>	2 swings (1 basket/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+1 slide/1 net climber) 1 slide 1 rocker 1 roundabout	Good	Wetpour	Good	3 seats 1 bin	Good		Medium
31	<b>Broad Street St Aidans</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+1 slide) 1 climber 1 rocker 1 roundabout 1 spinner 2 goal posts	Good	Wetpour	Good	5 seats 1 bin Fencing 2 gates	Good		Medium
32	<b>Fusehill Street St Aidans</b>	1 swing (1 basket) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 climber 1 rocker 1 spinner 1 goal post	Average—Good	Wetpour	Average	2 seats 2 bins Fencing 2 gates	Average		Medium
33	<b>Melbourne Park St Aidans</b>	2 swings (4 flats/4 cradles) 1 MPU (+1 net climber/1 slide)	Average	Grass matting Wetpour	Average	2 seats Fencing 1 self closing gate	Average		Low-Medium
34	<b>Eden Park Side Botcherby</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 rocker 1 spinner	Average	Bark	Good				Low-Medium
35	<b>Broadoaks Grange Botcherby</b>	1 swing (2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers	Average	Bark	Excellent				Low
36	<b>Scotby Road Durranshill</b>	1 swing (2 flats/ 2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers	Average—Good	Wetpour	Average-Good	1 seat 1 bin Fencing 1 self closing gate	Average		Medium
37	<b>Scotby Gardens Durranshill</b>	1 MPU (+ 1 net climber) 1 rocker	Average	Bark	Good	Fencing 1 gate	Average		Low
38	<b>Metal Box Botcherby</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 cantilever 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 climber 1 aerial runway	Average	Bark	Good	2 seats Fencing 2 self closing gates	Average		Medium-High

		<u>Equipment</u> <u>Condition:</u>	<u>Surfacing:</u>	<u>Surfacing</u> <u>Condition:</u>	<u>Furniture:</u>	<u>Furniture Condition:</u>	<u>Estimated Usage:</u>	
39	<b>Keenan Park Harraby</b>	2 swings (2 baskets) 1 adventure trail 1 net climber 2 slides 1 rocker 2 spinners 1 aerial runway 1 teen shelter	Average—Good	Grass matting	Average	4 seats 1 bin	Good	Medium-High
40	<b>Harraby Community Centre</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 1 climber (+ 1 net climber) 1 rocker 2 roundabouts 1 spinner 1 aerial runway	Good—Excellent	Grass matting	Good—Excellent	3 seats 1 bin	Good	Medium—High
41	<b>Lonsdale Grange Longholme Road</b>	1 swing (1 flat) 1 rocker	Average—Good	Bark	Average			Low—Medium
42	<b>Hunters Crescent Garlands</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+1 net climber/1 slide) 1 seesaw 2 rockers 1 roundabout	Good	Wetpour	Good	Fencing 1 self closing gate	Poor	Medium
43	<b>Parkland Village Garlands</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 2 MPUs (+1 net climber/ 2 slides) 1 seesaw 1 rocker 1 roundabout 1 games wall	Good	Wetpour	Good	2 seats 1 bin Fencing 1 self closing gate	Good	Low-Medium
44	<b>Dale End London Road</b>	2 swings (4 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+1 slide) 1 seesaw 2 rockers 1 spinner 2 play panels	Average	Bark	Excellent	5 seats Fencing 2 gates	Average	Medium
45	<b>Carliol Drive Harraby</b>	1 swing (2 cradles) 1 cantilever 1 climber 2 rockers 1 spinner	Average	Grass pack	Poor	2 seats 1 bin	Average	Medium
46	<b>Clarksfield Scotland Road</b>	1 swing (2 cradles/2 flats) 3 rockers (2 small/ 1 large) 1 roundabout 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 4 stepping stones	Average	Wetpour	Average	Fencing 2 self closing gates 1 bench 1 bin	Good	Medium

		<u>Equipment:</u>	<u>Equipment Condition:</u>	<u>Surfacing:</u>	<u>Surfacing Condition:</u>	<u>Furniture:</u>	<u>Furniture Condition:</u>	<u>Estimated Usage:</u>
47	<b>Moorville Drive Stanwix</b>	3 swings (1 basket/5 flats/2 cradles) 1 multiplay (+ 1 slide/ 2 net climbers) 1 climber (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers 2 roundabouts 2 spinners 1 aerial runway	Good—Excellent	Grass matting	Good	3 benches	Excellent	Medium
48	<b>Esk Road Lowry Hill</b>	1 swing (2 cradles) 1 adventure trail	Good	Grass matting	Good			Low
49	<b>Crindledyke</b>	1 slide 1 spinner 2 rockers	Excellent	Grass matting	Excellent	Fencing 1 self closing gate 1 bench	Excellent	Low
50	<b>Windsor Way Stanwix</b>	2 swings (4 flats/4 cradles) 2 MPUs (+3 slides) 1 rocker	Good	Wetpour	Average—Poor	Fencing 1 self closing gate 3 benches	Good	low-medium
51	<b>Mountain View Belah Community Centre</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 rocker 1 spinner 1 cycle track	Average—Poor	Grass pack	Average—Good	Fencing 2 self closing gates 1 bench	Good	low-medium
52	<b>Belah Parkside Belah Road</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 Climber (+ 1 slide) 1 rocker	Poor	Bark	Average	1 bench	Good	Low
53	<b>Etterby Gardens Gleneagles Drive</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 2 rockers	Average	Rubber tiles	Poor	Fencing 1 self closing gate 1 bench 1 bin	average	low-medium
54	<b>Houghton Tribune Drive</b>	2 swings (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 2 rockers 1 roundabout	Average	Bark	Good	Fencing 1 self closing gate 2 benches 2 bins	Good	low-medium
55	<b>Hadrians Gardens Centurions Walk</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+1 slide/1 net climber) 1 Climber (+1 slide) 1 seesaw	Average	Enviromulch	Good	2 benches	Average	Low
56	<b>Talkin Tarn</b>	1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 1 adventure trail	Excellent	Bark	Average	Fencing 1 self closing gate	Excellent	High
57	<b>Irthing Park Brampton</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide/1 net climber) 1 Rocker	Average-Good	Wetpour	Good	Fencing 1 self closing gate 2 benches	Average	low-medium
58	<b>Longtown Old Road</b>	2 swings (2 cradles/1 basket) 1 MPU (+ 1 slide) 1 rocker 1 roundabout	Average	Bark	Poor	Fencing 1 self closing gate 1 bench	Average	low
59	<b>Moor Crescent Longtown</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 roundabout	Excellent	Grass matting	Good			low
60	<b>Sandysykes</b>	1 swing (2 flats/2 cradles) 1 climber	Good	Bark	Good			low



# Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:  
**A.4**

Meeting Date: 3rd October 2013  
Portfolio: Communities and Housing  
Key Decision:  
Within Policy and  
Budget Framework  
Public / Private Public

Title: REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICE – Welfare Reform  
Report of: The Director of Community Engagement  
Report Number: CD48/13

**Purpose / Summary:** To provide an update on the discretionary assistance provided to housing benefit recipients affected by Welfare Reform.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Panel note the report.

**Tracking**

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 1.1 As part of its Welfare Reform programme, the Government has, from April 2013, implemented several changes to housing benefit. These have affected levels of benefit expenditure.
- 1.2 Under Occupancy provisions have been introduced to determine the level of housing benefit paid within the Social Rented Sector, to reflect the number of bedrooms in properties needed based on household composition. Where the number of bedrooms required is exceeded, housing benefit is reduced by either 14% for one bedroom or 25% for two bedrooms or more. The reduction, also referred to as the Spare Room Subsidy, has been applied to all cases where the size criteria have been met since April 2013 onwards.
- 1.3 The Benefit Cap, where the combined benefits received by working age housing benefit customers are compared to average earned income, was introduced in Carlisle from 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013 onwards. For all cases affected, detailed consideration of household benefit income and housing benefit entitlement has been used to determine the level of reduction needed to ensure that the average earned income threshold of £500 per week for a couple/lone-parent or £350 per week for a single person is applied. Where a reduction applies the level of housing benefit due is reduced down to a potential minimum award of 50p per week. In Carlisle, reductions have ranged from £4.45 to £111.59 per week for the 16 households affected to date.
- 1.4 For cases where there is an entitlement to housing benefit which is below the level of rent due, application can be made for additional financial support through a Discretionary Housing Payment. Government funding is available to provide assistance in these cases which are considered on personal circumstances such as affordability, income, expenditure and outgoings on an individual basis. Awards are made for an appropriate period in each case to ensure that assistance is given to those in need where required. Support can be reduced or awards may cease if circumstances change.
- 1.5 Due to reduced benefit entitlements, as a result of the new rules, a significant number of additional applications for discretionary housing payments have been made when compared to the previous year. 71 applications were considered for the period from March 2012 to August 2012 which compares to 311 applications received during the same period in 2013, a workload increase of 338%.



1.6 For the current financial year up to 9th September 2013, Discretionary Housing Payments of £43,596.95 have been awarded relating to 152 cases. This represents 30.56% of the £142,640 Government Funding contribution available. For comparison, for the period from March 2012 to August 2012, 20.81% was awarded

1.7 The cases are split by categories as follows

Category	Number of cases	Percentage of cases
Low Income	2	1.32%
Baby Due	8	5.26%
Social Size Criteria	111	73.03%
LHA Reforms	10	6.58%
Other	5	3.29%
Increase in expenditure	1	0.66%
Rent Restrictions	12	7.89%
Income Tapers	1	0.66%
Rent Deposit	1	0.66%
Benefit Cap	1	0.66%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100%</b>

1.8 As the changes have been introduced in the current financial year, it is anticipated that further applications will continue to be received as the impact of reduced benefit entitlement affects customer's ability to make rent payments.

1.9 Applications are being considered promptly and advice is being given on the options for assistance wherever possible. Levels of expenditure are being monitored closely and we will endeavour to utilise the available funding within the financial year.

**Contact Officer: Keith Gerrard**

**Ext: 7350**

**Appendices**

**attached to report: None**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- None

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance –**

**Local Environment –**

**Resources -**

# Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:  
**A.5**

Meeting Date: 3rd October 2013  
Portfolio: Communities and Housing  
Key Decision:  
Within Policy and  
Budget Framework  
Public / Private

Title: WELFARE ADVICE SERVICE  
Report of: The Director of Community Engagement  
Report Number: CD 49/13

**Purpose / Summary:**

An update report detailing the cost and impact of the Welfare Advice Services

**Recommendations:**

Note the current position

**Tracking**

Executive:	N/A
Overview and Scrutiny:	N/A
Council:	N/A

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Carlisle City Council's Welfare Advice Service provides specialist advice dealing only with welfare benefits either through referrals or direct. One FTE Manager and 2.6 x FTE Advisors assist on any aspect cases from initial claim to tribunal and upper tribunal representation.
- 1.2 The service is delivered via telephone advice and appointments, from the Civic Centre and two rural outreach surgeries. Home visit appointments are offered to anyone unable to access these bases due to disability or poor health.

## 2. SERVICE COSTS

- 2.1 The budgeted service costs for 2013/14 are £163,000 per year, of which £121,800 are employee costs:

Employee costs	£121,800
Transport costs	£100
Supplies and services	£7300
Support services	£33,000

## 3. IMPACT OF SERVICE

- 3.1 The 2012/13 total benefit gains are as detailed below:

	2012/13
Annual gain	£1,237,775.50
Total live enquiries	362
Total Appeals	127

- 3.2 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 27<sup>th</sup> August 2013 the total benefit gains was £560,240.38.
- 3.3 Demand for welfare advice services have increased as a result of current welfare reform changes. This has placing increased pressure delivery. As a result the

service is reviewing operational service delivery and developing further partnerships to ensure that the most vulnerable people can be assisted and represented appropriately. This has included prioritising caseloads and referrals and increased and enhanced partnership approaches with other local advice agencies such as:

- A trial project working in partnership with Cumbria Advice Network (CAN) and People First aiming to assist vulnerable people who struggle to advocate for themselves. This includes for example people with mental health problems or learning disabilities who are struggling to cope with the complexity of the welfare benefit system.
- Working as member of Carlisle’s Advice Transition’s Fund Partnership. This collaboration has secured funding for ‘Telly Talk’. Telly Talk is a webcam technology which allows a person sitting in a local venue to speak ‘face to face’ with an adviser. It will allow residents living in the more remote areas of the district to access advice services in a new and innovative way. It will be installed over the next couple of months at all the participating advice services (Cumbria Law Centre, Carlisle Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Age UK and Carlisle City Council benefits advice service).
- Welfare reform training and workshops for internal and external staff and groups
- Acting as a member of Carlisle’s Welfare Reform Board.

#### 4. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

<b>Action 3: In the light of welfare reform changes ensure that vulnerable residents and client groups housing needs are understood</b>		
Assess the housing and welfare / benefits needs arising from the government Universal Credit programme and seek to work with partners to meet these needs.	K Gerrard	April 2013
Review work programmes and service level agreements to ensure advice services supported by the Council are well co-ordinated and deliver good value for money.	K Gerrard	April 2013 - onwards
Review the use of Discretionary Housing Payments fund to ensure the most effective use.	K Gerrard	Through to 2016

**Contact Officer: Keith Gerrard**

**Ext: 7350**

**Appendices  
attached to report:**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- **None**

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance –**

**Local Environment –**

**Resources -**

# Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:

**A.6**

Meeting Date: 3rd October 2013  
 Portfolio: Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People & Communities & Housing  
 Key Decision:  
 Within Policy and Budget Framework  
 Public / Private Public  
 Title: TRANSFORMATION UPDATE  
 Report of: The Director of Community Engagement  
 Report Number: CD.50/13

**Purpose / Summary:**

This report summarises the recent transformation changes made within the Community Services Directorate. It provides a up to date structure chart and financial review

**Recommendations:**

Panel receive and consider the report

**Tracking**

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

## **1. BACKGROUND**

**1.1** Responding to ongoing financial pressure and a commitment to improve services to customers the City Councils has over recent years undertaken significant transformation and changes in its operational delivery and staffing structures. The Community Engagement Directorate has been part of this process and in October 2012 began of review of its operation. Consultation and revisions associated with its review were completed in spring 2013 and proposals subsequently implemented. Panel has been kept informed through this period and this report is part of the update and communication process.

## **2. INFORMATION**

**2.1** Details the staffing structure implemented from April 2013 is attached at Appendix 1

The savings target was £201,000. Of this £159,000 has so far been achieved. The shortfall of £42,000 relates to the Partnership Manager post which, following consultation was retained in the structure. This saving will be taken Corporately in 2014 and 2015.

## **4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**4.1** To inform Panel of transformational changes in the Community Engagement Directorate.

**Contact Officer: Keith Gerrard**

**Ext: 7350**

**Appendices  
attached to report:**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- None

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**



**Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance –**

**Local Environment –**

**Resources -**

