

Report to: Council

Agenda
Item

Meeting Date: Thursday 29th November, 2012

Public/Private*: Public

Title: Environment & Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Chairman's Report –
Councillor Layden

The Carlisle Tourist Information Centre has been the subject of a Task and Finish Group and the lead member Councillor Bainbridge presented its findings. Included in the report's recommendations was the proposal that a small group be set up to continue to monitor the work being undertaken. The review of the centre would explore how the centre could be self-funding and at possible commercial applications for the Assembly Rooms. It was resolved that the report was approved and presented to the Executive for a formal response.

The Panel considered the New Revenue Spending Pressures with regard to Building Control Income, Car Park Income, Highways Services and Lanes Income.

There was support for the policy of not increasing parking charges and it was hoped that this would encourage fuller car park use.

Lanes income projections had been reduced as part of the 2012/13 budget process for two and a half years; however, indications are that this reduction in income will continue and not recover properly until 2015/16. At the present time rents were lower to attract take up of units; as the economic recovery develops, rental income would be higher. The Report was noted.

The Panel considered the Summary of New Savings Proposals and Additional Income. It was stated that transformation savings had been re-profiled, the rationale being that if savings were taken early, the budget would be more stable over years 2 and 3.

The Review of Charges 2013/14 was looked at. With regard to Car Parking, measures put in place last year following consultants' recommendations, with the result that in category 1 & 2 car parks, decline had been halted, although category 3 & 4 car parks continued to decline. The uptake of Pay by Phone was as yet low. Increasing charges was seen to be counter-productive, so they would remain the same whilst recommendations could be fully evaluated and Pay by Phone encouraged.

Proposals for Talkin Tarn's pricing structure had been amended, which was welcomed. There was considerable discussion with regard to issues surrounding Talkin Tarn such as income shortfall, the unpopularity and scant take up of annual permits, the logistical difficulties of add-ons to permits and whether the full potential of Talkin Tarn was being realised, not least regarding the café.

Other charges discussed included Parks & Green Spaces, City Centre Events, Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act and Waste Services.

It was resolved that the Panel's observations be conveyed to the Executive and that a Task & Finish Group be set up in the New Year to look at Talkin Tarn.

The Panel noted the Economic Development Report, covering Tourism and City Centre Management, the Enterprise Centre and Planning Services.

The Panel discussed the Report on the Economic Partnership, following a slide presentation by the Deputy Chief Executive with several concerns being raised: concern at businesses moving away from the area, lack of local businesses on County Council tender lists, the devaluation of apprenticeships, road and rail links, empty city offices, net migration of young people, lack of effective involvement of educational establishments in the partnership, the need for better promotion of Carlisle.

The Report was noted and it was resolved that a further report on the Carlisle Economic Partnership be submitted to the Panel in 6 months time, with representatives of the partnership being invited to attend that meeting.

The Botchergate Conservation Area Action Plan was discussed and members were updated on progress. The point was made that it would be helpful if the City Council worked with the County Council Local Area Committee to share ideas and work with industry.

**Cllr Stephen Layden
December 2012**

