

**PORTFOLIO:**

**ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING**

Report of  
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR  
RAY BLOXHAM**

**Councillor R D Bloxham  
Environment & Housing Portfolio Holder**

## **HOUSING**

### **Housing Strategy 2012 -16**

Development over the past 12 months on a Housing Strategy that follows on from the Housing Strategy 2005-10 has involved working with the Carlisle Strategic Housing Partnership (CSHP). This has included a joint Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) event in November 2011 with the Planning service to which over 60 representatives attended with feedback from the workshop sessions informing the amended strategy document that was taken to the Executive on 13/2/12 and is due to go to Full Council on 6/3/12.

### **Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's) – Integrated Pilot**

Funding has been provided by Health and Social Care across the 6 district councils in Cumbria in the two years 2011/12 and 2012/13 to enable the development of a preferred model for delivering the DFG's. This involves looking across the areas of health, social care and housing to map current processes as well as looking at good practice from other areas and alternative models of provision. Alternative models would look to integrate processes to become more efficient and responsive to clients needs within the resources available. A working group first met in January this year and aims to provide a range of options by October this year.

### **Homelessness, Prevention and Accommodation Services**

Community Overview &Scrutiny Task and Finish group on homelessness held a partner meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February with invited representatives from 11 key agencies with the purpose of suggesting areas of improvement around the following key themes:

- Homeless Prevention
- Consultation and Involvement of Service users
- Working together
- Improved working relationships

An update report with suggested targets will be produced by the Task &Finish group.

### **Homelessness Services**

From November 2011 the private sector housing team have been contributing to homelessness prevention through the introduction of a monthly Landlord and Tenant surgery which is held on the first Wednesday on every month from 12pm to 2pm in the Customer contact centre. This is an opportunity for landlords and tenants to drop in and get advice around any aspect of renting properties, to date there has been a total of 14 people assisted, 9 landlords and 5 tenants.

### **Hostel Services**

The Hostel Services has continued to provide our in house pre-tenancy training to all clients living in our temporary accommodation schemes.

We have facilitated several cooking on a budget and 3 creative art sessions through staff at Tullie House with the residents of both John Street and the women and family hostels which were well attended and successful. We have also supported residents to attend voluntary placements at Croft Farm and other community groups.

In addition to this we have facilitated advice and activity sessions from a number of other agencies including:

- HALO project activities
- Play and youth workers
- We arranged a Christmas party for the families and children accommodated in our schemes and prepared the provision of food and presents for all residents over the Christmas period
- Quiz and trivia nights with a shared meal and Sunday lunch provision building on the success of the cookery sessions

### **Replacement Women and Family Accommodation**

Plans were submitted for planning on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and were approved on 16<sup>th</sup> December by the DC panel subject to a discussion on that element of land outside the wall boundary. The tender was published on the CHEST on 6<sup>th</sup> February and are due to return on 5<sup>th</sup> March:

Key Steps	Anticipated timescales
Tenders to contractors	Early February 2012
Tender returns	Early March 2012
Review tenders	Mid March 2012
Award construction contract	End of March 2012
Start on site at Water street	End of April 2012
Completion	End of March 2013
Anticipated completion	End of February 2013

### **Shaddon Gateway Centre & Dispersed Foyer Services**

We have held 2 stakeholder meetings in November 2011 and January 2012 attended by representatives of a range of key agencies. We discussed the work on the centre to date, introduced the YMCA and outlined the development of future services, business opportunities and development. These meetings will continue bi-monthly and will have an open invite to include a wider range of agencies and service deliverers with an agreed clear purpose for the group members supporting and championing the centre and the services moving forward.

Tim Linford and officers have been inviting and facilitating key stakeholders, service providers and following up business opportunities with visits to the centre and exploring leads on a 1:1 basis. There have been a number of visits to date with Adult social care contractors / County Council with opportunities currently being explored and appointments on-going with others including the PCT and NHS over the next month.

We have agreed with the YMCA that the handover and opening of the Shaddon Gateway will be the 1st April 2012 and we will be promoting the building and highlighting the opening to generate interest with assistance from internal public relations officers.

The YMCA are currently exploring options and in discussion with Private developers, and Riverside HA to gauge the options for accommodation options for young people, and will explore opportunities with successful providers of young peoples accommodation based services (following award of SP tenders in February 2012).

### Next Steps and Key Dates

Action	Key date
Stakeholder meetings	Ongoing bi-monthly
Initiate discussions with local industry e.g. Sainsburys, Carrs etc	February 2012 and on-going
Lease, management contract agreed and signed	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2012
Establish working partnerships with stakeholders, service deliverers and business opportunities	January to April 2012 (and on-going)
Website completion	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2012
Contract to begin / Management handover <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pricing policy in place</li> <li>• Targets and monitoring arrangements to begin</li> <li>• General assistant appointed</li> <li>• Recruit and train volunteers</li> <li>• Centre opening</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2012
Centre User Panel established	June 2012
Programme of activities for all users and age group in place	June 2012

## **Supporting People**

The mini competition began on 5th January 2012 and ended on 23rd January 2012 to which we submitted a bid for the Homeless women and family hostel contract. We were notified on 31st January 2012 that we were successful for this contract and that Impact housing association are the successful provider to deliver the Single homeless hostel support contract.

Weekly meetings with Impact Housing Association are taking place from 15th February 2012 to confirm transitional and longer term working arrangements to ensure that service users residing within John Street Hostel can continue to access appropriate responsive good quality support services.

We will not know the full implications within the District of the changes in services and providers and their impacts on vulnerable people until appointments following mini competition have been confirmed in March 2012.

## **Welfare Advice Service**

Total benefit gains for the Benefit Advice Service over the last two years:

1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010 to 30 Jun 2010 ~ £883,324.04

1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 to 31 Dec 2010 ~ £1,099,036.20

1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2011 to 30 Jun 2011 ~ £1,022,905.20

1<sup>st</sup> Jul 2011 to 31 Dec 2011 ~ £944,170.02

We continue to give support and advice to those in need.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

- The air quality monitoring equipment on Paddy's Market Caldewgate has been replaced with modern equipment by Defra. The monitoring station forms part of the national monitoring network recording levels of nitrogen dioxide. Levels of nitrogen dioxide from motor vehicles continue to be a concerns within Carlisle City Centre and the Environmental Health Service is working on a new Action Plan with partners to reduce this respiratory irritant. By replacing the monitoring equipment Defra has allowed the City Council to keep the old equipment which can be used for spares for our own equipment at Stanwix Bank. It will be interesting to see what affect the Northern Bypass has on the figures for the future.
- The Environmental Health Service is working with CREA (Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency) to promote its free Environmental Auditing service ENWorks. This is a European funded initiative where CREA officers will visit local businesses and advise them on how they can save money, and the

planet, by how they manage their energy and waste. The Service is referring interested business to CREA on 01768 – 891555.

- Environmental Health Officers contributed to the Healthy Cooking Presentations lead by the local chief John Crouch. Officers advised on good food hygiene practices and how to cook turkeys safely. Environmental Health Officers also attended the two Poultry Auctions carried out at local Auction Marts and were pleased to report the poultry inspected were generally of a good standard.
- I'm very pleased to report that Environmental Health Officers Rebecca Mckee and Michael Cunningham gave their first Level 2 Food Hygiene courses at Talking Tarn and achieved a 100% pass rate.

## **WASTE SERVICES**

### **New Calendars**

The new calendars for the refuse and recycling have been sent to all Carlisle City Council customers the initial impression is that all has gone smoothly and very few problems have been experienced.

### **Round Review for the plastic and cardboard**

We have reviewed our plastic and cardboard rounds to improve the efficiency of the collection and help to realise further savings for the council.

The altered rounds, using 3 vehicles, go live at the beginning of March. We are hopeful that there will be the minimum of disruption to the service but there will be a learning curve while the crews are learning new rounds.

All customers have been informed (letter sent with the current calendars) of the possible changes to the plastic and card collection and have been advised to present their waste at the kerbside no later than 7.00am on the day of collection.

### **Mechanical Biological Treatment**

The Mechanical Biological Treatment plant (MBT) is now fully operational and through most of the initial teething problems.

The initial concern regarding a comment that Shanks had made about their inability to accept dog waste has been resolved. Dog waste mixed in with mixed waste collections is acceptable.

### **Tesco Bring Site**

Due to the excessive amount of fly-tipping at one of our busiest and most productive bring sites –Tesco Rose Hill, we have now erected a temporary CCTV with the approval of Tesco. As yet, It is too early to assess how successful or otherwise this has been. It is hoped that the signage alone will act as a deterrent.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD & GREEN SPACES**

Our submissions for Green Flag awards for 8 of the Council's parks were completed at the end of January. These awards recognise the quality of our parks and the commitment of local communities to their upkeep. The judging will take place in May and June, with the announcement of winners to follow in July.

New woodland has been created at Talkin Tarn Country Park after a successful grant application to the Forestry Commission. 8,000 trees have been planted to join up existing pockets of woodland and hedgerow and creating new habitats for wildlife. Plans for later this year include a new shallow pool for wading birds and improvements to the car park.

At Rickerby Park, work starts on 20<sup>th</sup> February to restore the railings around the Cenotaph. Commemorating the dead of the County of Westmorland & Cumberland in WW1, the Cenotaph was built with public donations and unveiled to a crowd of 25,000 people in 1922. The centenary of the outbreak of WW1 will occur in 2014.

At Kingmoor Nature Reserve, a new section of woodland and some wildlife ponds have been completed as part of the landscaping of the newly built CNDR road. A strip of land was sacrificed as part of the road's construction and these new wildlife areas have been given back in exchange.

## **HIGHWAYS SERVICES**

### **Pay by Phone**

Tenders have been invited from Providers wishing to provide a Pay by Phone service for the City Council in its car parks. This service will be introduced in the next 2 months and will provide an easier way of paying car park charges for those who do not carry much cash or who are uncertain how long they wish to stay.

### **Car Park Improvements**

The Civic Centre car park and Bitts Park car park have been resurfaced and remarked. This is the first phase of improvements to our car parks to ensure a quality service is provided for users paying to use our car parks. The parking spaces have been increased in size to make parking easier, also spaces have been allocated for motorcycles and those with children.

### **Repairs to Concrete Roads**

A programme of improvements to concrete roads is underway to repair damaged and cracked areas of roads on various housing estates. This work is funded by the claimed rights budget from the County Council.