

# COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**APRIL 2012.**

**At the meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, questions were received from a member of the public. These, together with the chairman's responses, can be found in the Minutes of the meeting.**

**The Panel examined the Overview Report and Work Programme. Minute excerpts from the February meeting of the Executive referring to the Housing Strategy 2012/16 and to the Community Overview and Scrutiny's Task and Finish report on the Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme were noted by the Panel.**

**The Task and Finish Group's draft report on Homelessness was reviewed by the Panel, who found its contents informative and were supportive of its recommendations.**

**An update report on progress made on the new accommodation for Homeless Families and Women was welcomed.**

**After examining the draft Scrutiny Annual Report, it was agreed that there was an issue concerning the formatting of the Forward Plan.**

**The Panel recommended that items for scrutiny be made available to the relevant O. and S. Panel without, as at present, specifying a date for that scrutiny. This recommendation will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Group and the Executive.**

**A very full and explanative presentation was given to the Panel on the Welfare Reform Bill and the Local Government Finance Bill. This gave the opportunity to learn about and question the aims of these measures, the changes they would bring about, the areas of risks and the means by which the Council plus its partners, will keep the public informed on the changes.**

**The Panel received a further report from the Cumbria Coordinator on the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Project and following questioning, information on other local or Cumbria wide schemes, plus the Government's Green Deal scheme.**

**A wish was expressed to obtain a breakdown of the outcomes of the Cumbria Affordable Warmth scheme for those who are in the priority group in relation to Fuel Poverty. This information at the time of writing this report, is not yet available, but should be later in the month.**

**A report was received on the Council's draft Equality Objectives, which will form the basis of action planning for the next 3 years.**

**Members will remember that in October 2010, the Council was recognised by independent peer assessors, as an Achieving Authority as set out in the Equality Framework for Local Government. The first District Council in Cumbria to be**

**so rewarded. Under the new Equality Act (2010), a general equality duty with specific duties has come into being and the Panel had the opportunity to question the actions to be taken to comply with these new duties.**

**Amongst those actions, the Council's Corporate Equality Group is to be reinstated and the members suggested that the views of young people be included in its work, as well as those groups with protected characteristics.**

**Olwyn Luckley**