

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 14 JULY 2011 AT 10.10AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Luckley (Chairman) Councillors Mrs Bradley, Glover, McDevitt, Nedved, Mrs Parsons, Mrs Prest and Scarborough.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Geddes – Community Engagement Portfolio Holder
Councillor Bloxham – Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder
Ms Doran, Head of Asset Management, Riverside Carlisle
Mr Irving, Riverside Carlisle
Mr Cronin, YMCA
Ms Lucas, YMCA

COSP.46/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

COSP.47/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Bradley declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.6 – Shaddon Gateway (and Dispersed Foyer Services) Update. The interest related to the fact that she was a Governor of Carlisle College.

Councillor Mrs Luckley declared a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.6 Shaddon Gateway (and Dispersed Foyer Services) Update. The interest related to the fact that she had previously made a decision regarding the Gateway as a Member of the Executive.

COSP.48/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

COSP.49/11 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, thanked the Town Clerk and Chief Executive for her continuous input and assistance into the work of the Panel and passed on the Panel's best wishes for her future.

COSP.50/11 AGENDA

The Chairman thanked Mr Gerrard for Agenda Item A.5 – Carlisle City Council Policy on Discretionary Rate Relief to Charitable and Not for Profit Organisations and reminded the Panel that they had previously requested to see a report on the procedure and criteria that would be used to determine how applications for the additional element of the discretionary rate relief would be considered. The report that had been submitted did not contain the information that had been requested.

Members expressed their disappointment that a criteria was not yet available for scrutiny purposes or for the organisations who needed to move forward with grant applications. The organisations and charities needed the criteria to see if they qualified and the delay affected their capacity to budget.

The Chairman asked the Panel to consider deferring the report to the next meeting when it would be scrutinised alongside the requested criteria. She also asked the Panel to agree to move agenda item A.2 Overview Report to the last item on the agenda so no unnecessary delay was caused to external organisations who had attended the Panel.

RESOLVED – 1) That report CD.09/11 Discretionary Rate Relief be deferred to the next meeting of the Panel to allow for a more detailed report to be prepared by the Assistant Director (Community Engagement).

2) That agenda item A.2 – Overview report be moved to the last item on the agenda.

COSP.51/11 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

COSP.52/11 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT RIVERSIDE - UPDATE

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) submitted report CD.06/11 which gave a brief update on the Partnership Agreement with Riverside Carlisle. He reminded the Panel of the background to the Partnership and introduced Ms Doran and Mr Irving from Riverside Carlisle to the Panel.

Ms Doran highlighted the work of the Steering Group and the three sub groups; the Place Group, Property Action Group and People Action Group.

A Member reminded the Panel that, at its meeting on 13 January 2011, they had requested an update on the following matters:

- Feedback from the out of hours review

- An update on the action plan to reduce the costs of void repairs

- The annual action plan

- Feedback on the work of the three focus groups

- Consideration of the project due to begin in 2011 as to how properties with adaptations could be recycled

Ms Doran updated the Panel as requested:

Out of Hours Review

She explained that, traditionally, Riverside had closed for a two week period over Christmas, as a result of the out of hours review it had been agreed with staff that, beginning this year, they would now work the Christmas period apart from bank holidays.

Cost of Void Repairs

HouseMark had been invited in to audit the void process and cost to assess where Riverside fit in terms of other Registered Social Landlords. The audit identified that Riverside's cost were high but the standard of work was also high. They stated that there was too much emphasis on the work instead of getting the property back out to let. From the audit Riverside hoped to reduce the cost of void repairs to the national average and increase the turnaround of the properties.

Members asked if the age of properties and the number of frozen pipes had been taken into consideration when considering the cost of void repairs. They also asked if Riverside Carlisle had been involved in any affordable warmth work.

Ms Doran responded that the age of the properties had been taken into consideration and there was an ongoing programme of work to insulate pipes before winter. She added that Riverside were involved in the Affordable Warmth agenda and had their own affordable warmth plans as well as contributing to the County's Affordable Warmth Action Plan.

Recycling of adapted homes

Members reminded Riverside of the increasing pressure to supply Disabled Facilities Grants and asked how Riverside were dealing with properties that were adapted when they became vacant.

Ms Doran explained that Riverside had held a full review of how vacant adapted properties would be used. The review considered how adapted properties would be let to the right tenant by using external organisations that could refer the appropriate people. The review also dealt with the allocation process, choice based letting and feedback from external organisations. Information about adapted properties was also being captured. Ms Doran explained that the findings of the review would be submitted to Riverside Board for their consideration, following that it would be submitted to the City Council.

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

- A Member raised a number of issues that tenants had reported regarding the communal upgrade scheme. Tenants had complained about the manner of the communications received from Riverside and the high charges that the

leaseholders had to pay for the work. In some cases the costs had created debt for tenants.

Mr Irving acknowledged that there had been major issues regarding the communication with leaseholders. Initially the communication had been driven by legislation and the communication had not been effective. He stated that Riverside had learned from the process and now met with leaseholders and established a leaseholder group to provide better information. The scheme had been delayed for 10 weeks to allow for further consultation and to review the process. The review also allowed for Riverside to source different suppliers and allowed for further consultation with the Fire Enforcement Officer and other Registered Social Landlords. Riverside understood that the cost of the work may be difficult for some leaseholders and worked with them to arrange the best payment plan for the leaseholder.

Mr Irving added that there had been an agreement for leaseholders to carry out the work themselves but any work had to meet the necessary safety requirements that applied to Riverside.

- A Member commented that it was disappointing that Riverside had not improved communication with its tenants.
- Did Riverside carry out any enforcement action on tenants who failed to keep their gardens in a reasonable condition?

Ms Doran confirmed that Riverside did carry out enforcement work but it was very difficult to evict a tenant for a breach of terms based on the condition of their gardens. Riverside offered several schemes to tenants to assist in keeping their gardens tidy; when tenants refused the schemes it did provide more evidence to support enforcement action.

A Member commented that there had been a marked improvement in the condition of gardens on a number of estates due to the Patch Walks and the work of Riverside.

Ms Doran and Mr Irving then gave a short presentation updating the Panel on the work Riverside had carried out on Development Schemes and Sheltered Housing Schemes. The presentation updated Members on the total investment; total unit numbers and how many units had been added for rent and shared ownership. The presentation highlighted the role of Riverside with regard to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and outlined the key challenges for Riverside.

RESOLVED – 1) That Ms Doran and Mr Irving be thanked for their presentation and input into the meeting;

2) That the Panel looked forward to receiving a copy of the review of the future of adapted Riverside properties as soon as it was available;

3) That a written report be submitted from Riverside Carlisle in 6 months time updating the Panel on the following issues:

Feedback from the out of hours review

Action Plan to reduce the costs of void repairs

The annual action plan

Feedback on the work of the three focus groups

Consideration of the project due to begin in 2011 as to how properties with adaptations could be recycled

COSP.53/11 CUMBRIA AFFORDABLE WARMTH PROJECT - UPDATE

The Affordable Warmth Project Development Officer (Mr Barlow) presented report CD.05/11 which updated the Panel on the work of the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Project, strategy and the Government's 'Green Deal' initiative.

Mr Barlow updated the Panel on the Cumbria Warm Homes Projects, explaining that the project helped home owners to understand their energy needs and was designed to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty across the County. The project would be launched to all six districts in August 2011. The project would be targeted to neighbourhoods that had been identified as having high levels of insulation requirements.

He explained that Warm Homes Energy Audits were available free through the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Partnership for homeowners to receive an energy audit inspection and a personalised report which contained recommendations on energy saving products and services and information about no cost energy measures.

Mr Barlow reported that the project would be funded using the Carbon Energy Reduction Target (CERT) funding through E-ON Energy and there would be no cost to the District Councils or the County Council. He added that the funding would end in December 2012 and would be replaced with the Government's Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO).

Mr Barlow informed the Panel that the Project was a member of the Cumbria Advice Network, the membership allowed many of the third sector organisations to raise awareness of the project and receive referrals. He added that the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Strategy was being developed with the main area of work being the delivery plan which would support the strategy.

He outlined the changes to the Warm Front work and informed Members of the new Green Deal which would be introduced from January 2013. The scheme was the Government's flagship energy driver and relied heavily on interventions from energy companies and retailers. The scheme allowed bill payers to undertake energy efficiency improvements without having to have

the money in advance. At the heart of the offer was a rule that estimated savings on bills would always equal or exceed the cost of work.

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

- The Cumbria Affordable Warmth Project was a positive move to assist those who were fuel poor; how would it be promoted so that the hard to reach and vulnerable groups could access the services?

Mr Barlow responded that the available funding was to reduce carbon emissions and built into the scheme was the requirement that 50% of the funding had to be used supporting those in priority groups, the scheme would fail if this requirement was not met. He explained that there was ongoing work to engage with a number of authorities and organisations who had direct access to the vulnerable groups.

A Member asked if any work had been incorporated into the project to help those who were vulnerable to identify any support or benefits that they could be entitled to.

Mr Barlow stated that a fuel poor home was one that spent more than 10% of the homes income on keeping the home warm. The first step of the energy survey includes the opportunity for the applicant to take part in a benefit check. There is also an opportunity take part in a benefit check when the property is visited. The service had to be offered with some caution as there were limited resources available.

- How would the success of the programme be monitored?

Mr Barlow clarified that the aim was to provide a whole house survey and give a costing of any work required and information on any funding that may be available. The work would mainly be loft insulation to reduce carbon emission but there may be instances when wall insulation could be required with a financial contribution from the client.

He highlighted the Government's Green Deal project which would change the way energy was delivered to all homes. There was insufficient information on how the project would affect customers and a consultation would begin in September. The Hills Review was due to be finished by January 2012, the review looked at the definition of fuel poor and how to work more effectively in terms of identifying where those properties may be.

He added that Professor John Ashton, Regional Director of Public Health, felt it was time to change home energy bills. Energy was charged at a high rate for the beginning of the use then reduced to a lower rate the longer it was used, Mr Ashton felt that this was the wrong way around and homes should be able to be heated to a certain level, for a certain time, for a certain cost. The Government did provide a household discount for fuel but the energy

companies had increased their prices. Mr Barlow felt that Mr Ashton's approach was reasonable in both energy and business terms.

RESOLVED – That the Panel fully supported the Affordable Warmth Scheme and looked forward to an update in the Autumn which included the consultation document for the Government's Green Deal and the Cumbria Affordable Warmth Strategy.

COSP.54/11 SHADDON GATEWAY (AND DISPERSED FOYER SERVICES) UPDATE

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter Councillor Mrs Luckley left the meeting and Councillor Glover chaired the item.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) presented report CD.07/11 which gave an update on the development of the Shaddon Gateway Centre in Carlisle.

The Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation Manager (Ms Rhodes) introduced Mr Cronin and Ms Lucas from the YMCA to the Panel and reminded the Panel of the two main aims of the Shaddon Gateway Centre for service delivery within the community:

- Dispersed Foyer Services for young people
- Health, employment, advice, training, prevention and support services for all.

Ms Rhodes gave a brief outline of the background to the Centre reminding the Panel that the construction of the Centre was due to be completed in November/December 2011 and Carlisle YMCA had been chosen, through a tender process, as the preferred partner. The Council aimed to work in partnership with the YMCA to ensure that the business plan, priorities and vision for the Centre were successful and provided a progressive and holistic service to the community.

The agreed working relationship between the Council and the YMCA was based on agreed priorities and outcomes, which focused on transparency and mutual understanding. Due to the nature of the Centre it would take time to build up business and revenue therefore in order to reduce risk the Council would prefer a longer lease period with regular reviews. The terms of contract and quality and delivery standards would be discussed and agreed as part of negotiations regarding the working relationship and would be confirmed by 30 September 2011 with the handover planned for January/February 2012.

Ms Rhodes outlined the sustainability, shared risks and rewards of the Centre and added that, as part of the tender process, Carlisle YMCA had submitted a business case which provided anticipated income and expenditure for the first twelve months of operation. The case had been analysed by the Council's finance section who felt that 'the overall projection is that the break even position will be achieved'.

She then gave more details on the YMCA Dispersed Foyer development and the capital availability. Carlisle YMCA had confirmed that they had start up monies of £150,000 and the capital sale of the YMCA building would be recycled into the Shaddon Gateway Centre. Carlisle YMCA had enquired whether there was any opportunity for the capital monies to be increased through partnership with the Council to enable them to purchase property to be utilised for the Young Person's Foyer accommodation ensuring revenue through rental income and increased sustainability.

The Council confirmed that they would not be in a position at this stage to contribute but officers would facilitate opportunities with other partners/contacts as a route to develop accommodation for young people. Carlisle YMCA would be able to tender for grant funding and commissioning of Supporting People contracts for young people services to be delivered through the Centre as an income stream.

In conclusion Ms Rhodes outlined the next steps and the key dates for the development of the Centre.

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

- The YMCA submitted a business case for the first 12 months, had the City Council's Finance Section raised any issues and if the break even position was not achieved what would happen?

Ms Rhodes responded that finance's response was the brief statement included in the report and the business case projections were based on rental income and other developments within the Centre.

Mr Cronin agreed that the project was high risk but the YMCA Board had felt it was a risk worth taking. If the Centre did not break even there would be severe financial consequences for the future of the YMCA. He added that the second year of the Centre would depend on the support received from other agencies.

Mr Gerrard explained that the Council's finance section had considered the business plan to test the offer made by the YMCA. It was felt that the risks were reasonable and balanced. If the break even position was not achieved the Council would have a building that was not meeting its potential and other opportunities for the building would have to be sought.

- All major projects undertaken by the Council fell under the Prince 2 principles and required a risk assessment; it would be beneficial for the Panel to see the risk assessment.
- Where would the revenue come from for the Centre?

Mr Cronin highlighted a number of different income streams that the Centre would have and explained that the key income would be rental income from agencies that used the Centre as their base.

- Was the agreement between the City Council and the YMCA in a position to support the tender process for Supporting People contracts?

Mr Cronin explained that although the YMCA was in partnership with the Council it would carry out the work for the Supporting People tender process.

- The report stated that the Centre would have links with Carlisle College, would any courses offered be free and how many people were expected to undertake the courses?

Ms Lucas confirmed that the YMCA was working on establishing links with the College. The College currently used external facilitators for some of their courses and it was hoped that the Centre could be used. The courses offered would be 'Skills for Life' courses such as reading and writing.

- The aims and pathways were very ambitious, how long would it take for all of them to be in place?

Mr Cronin clarified that the aims and pathways were aspirational for the Centre and would depend on the local environment and community.

A Member felt that the aims and pathways table would be more useful if it included some timescales so they could be monitored effectively. The Panel would also like to see targets included and the services that the Centre proposed to provide.

Ms Rhodes explained that work was being undertaken on the details, commitments and timescales and more detail would be included in the table following the meeting with stakeholders in September.

- Had any consideration been given to the impact the centre would have on existing services within in Carlisle?

Ms Rhodes reminded the Panel that key partners and stakeholders had been involved in the detail and vision of the project from the beginning and the outcomes in the report came from the partners to enhance provision of services. Some agencies had approached the Centre as an opportunity for them to improve as they operated from poor high cost premises.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed with the issues that the Panel had brought up and stressed the need to see both the risk assessment and the details of the contract with the YMCA. He also suggested that it may be useful for the Panel to visit other centres that the YMCA was involved in.

- Part of the original Foyer development included accommodation for young people, how would this issue be addressed?

Mr Cronin agreed that accommodation for young people was a serious requirement and more work was needed with Registered Social Landlords and private landlords to move the matter forward.

RESOLVED – 1) That the current position with regard to the Shaddon Gateway (and Dispersed Foyer Services) be noted;

2) That the City Council's Risk Assessment and the YMCA Risk Mobilisation for the project be circulated to the Panel.

3) That an update on the Shaddon Gateway (and Dispersed Foyer Services) including an updated Aims and Pathways table and details on the Supporting People tenders be brought to the Panel on 24 November 2011.

COSP.55/11 FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN

Councillor Mrs Luckley returned to the meeting.

The Environmental Health Manager (Mr Burns) submitted report LE.14/11 providing details of the Food Law Enforcement Plan covering the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Mr Burns explained that the Plan linked to the key priority actions of the Council's Corporate Plan and also sought to direct resources into achieving the priority outcomes for regulatory services as detailed in the Local Better Regulation Office's consultations document "Priority Regulatory Outcomes - A New Approach to Refreshing the National Enforcement Priorities for Local Authority Regulatory Services" (February 2011). The Plan sat within the full Environmental Health Service Plan which included the General Plan, the Health and Safety Plan and the Environmental Protection Plan.

In improving food standards the Environmental Health Service was contributing towards ensuring a safe, healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefit of consumers. Service Plans were an important part of the process to ensure that national priorities and standards were addressed and delivered locally.

Mr Burns informed Members that, although the Food Standards Agency's Food Law Codes of Practice detailed national food policy, it did afford local authorities an element of flexibility over how to deliver the national food controls. The Plan set out how and at what level official food controls would be provided in accordance with the Codes of Practice. He added that the Food Law Code of Practice recommended that food service plans were approved at the relevant level established for the local authority with a view to ensuring local transparency and accountability, and to show the Service's contribution to the authority's Corporate Plan.

The matter was considered by Executive on 27 June 2011 (EX.066/11).

The decision of the Executive was:

‘That the Executive supported the key actions of the Environmental Health Service’s Food Law Enforcement Plan and the General Plan 2011 to 2012 and, in line with the Council’s Policy Framework, made the report available for consideration by the Community overview and Scrutiny Panel.’

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

- Were there the necessary resources available within the Environmental Health Team to carry out the Service Plan?

Mr Burns explained that the Plan had been prepared using the existing resources; if the resources changed in 2012/13 then the Plan would change to accommodate this. If there was an emergency that called on extra resources from the section then there would be some delay to the delivery of the Plan.

- The appendices have a column for progress; it would be useful to have any reasons for any delays in reaching the targets recorded here.

Mr Burns responded that the document was a working document that would be placed on the internet and updated regularly, this would include reasons for any delays. Mr Burns added that it was hoped that the new Plan would be more engaging and would provide better links with the Council’s Corporate Plan. It was also hoped that the Plan would allow for the section to use their skills to improve environmental health across the community.

- Was there any onus on traders who sold food to support the clean up of the area they traded in?

Assistant Food Health and Safety Manager (Mr Edwards) confirmed that there was no responsibility on the food trader once the customer had left the premises. One of the Environmental Health’s priority was to monitor where food waste went. The Local Environment Directorate was responsible for the street cleaning and would have more information.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder commented that the clean up of certain areas within the City Centre following the weekend had previously been difficult as the Council did not have the proper equipment but this was being rectified.

RESOLVED – That the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan be welcomed.

COSP.56/11 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.18/11 which provided an overview of matters relating to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel’s work and included the latest version of the work programme and Forward Plan items which related to the Panel.

Mrs Edwards reported that:

- the Forward Plan of Executive key decisions, covering the period 1 July to 31 October 2011 had been published on 17 June 2011 and KD.021/11 – Carlisle and Eden Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Plan 2011-12 was the only issue contained in the Plan which fell into the remit of this Panel.
- the Terms of Reference and Protocol for joint scrutiny of the Carlisle and Eden Crime and Disorder Partnership (CDRP) had been agreed in March 2010. It had been agreed that Crime and Disorder matters would mostly be carried out by the Joint Carlisle and Eden CDRP Scrutiny Panel. Members were asked to nominate representatives and substitutes for the Joint Scrutiny Panel. Arrangements were being made to hold a Joint Panel to scrutinise the Carlisle and Eden CDRP Plan and the minutes of the meeting would be submitted to this Panel in September.
- the Panel had, at their meeting on 23 June 2011, considered the response from the Executive to the Neighbourhood Working Task Group report. Members had requested that a fuller response be provided to each of the recommendations. A matrix of the recommendations had been prepared and circulated. The Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel had considered the matrix and had agreed to monitor the recommendations relevant to their Panel in six months time.
- the Panel had held its Development Session on 12 July and an amended work programme and schedule of agreed issues had been circulated. Members agreed to hold two Task and Finish Groups, one on Disabled Facilities Grants and one on Housing Services. Members were asked to consider appointment to the Groups. The Panel felt that it would be beneficial to all Members to receive a presentation on the impact of the changes to the benefits system.

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

2) That Councillors Mrs Luckley, Mrs Parsons and Mrs Prest be appointed as representatives on the Joint Carlisle and Eden CDRP Scrutiny Panel and Councillors Mrs Bradley and Nedved as substitutes.

3) That progress on the recommendations of the Neighbourhood Working Task and Finish Group relevant to this Panel would be reported to the Panel on a six monthly basis with urgent issues being brought to Members when necessary.

4) That an email would be circulated to all Members of the Panel requesting nominations for the Disabled Facilities Task and Finish Group and the Housing Issues Task and Finish Group.

COSP.57/11 SUSPENSION OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE

RESOLVED – That during the above item the Council Procedure Rule 9 in relation to the duration of meetings be suspended in order that the meeting could continue over the time of three hours.

(The meeting ended at 1.10pm)