

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 1 JUNE 2017 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Paton (Chairman), Burns, Bainbridge (as substitute for Councillor Layden), Ellis, Mrs Mallinson, McDonald, McNulty and Sidgwick S.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Miss Sherriff – Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder (10.10 – 11.35am)
Councillor Bowditch – City Council representative on the Cumbria Police and Crime Panel

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager
Customer Services Manager
Policy and Performance Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

COSP.27/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Layden, Councillor Mrs Bradley- Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder and Councillor Ms Quilter - Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder.

COSP.28/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

COSP.29/17 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That the Agenda be agreed as circulated.

COSP.30/17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED (1) – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2017 be signed by the Chairman.

(2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2017 be noted.

COSP.31/17 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

COSP.32/17 ROUGH SLEEPING AND BEGGING WITHIN CARLISLE

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager submitted a report giving the overview of the levels of rough sleeping within Carlisle and District; the work to date to address rough sleeping and begging within the City Centre; and the strategic priorities outlined within the Interagency Homelessness Strategy for 2015-20.

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager outlined the Council's strategic and statutory responsibilities reminding the Panel of the Interagency Homelessness Strategy for Carlisle 2015-20 which was focused on four key priorities as detailed in the report.

She reported that the City Council worked closely with key stakeholders and members of the public to ensure that anyone reported and identified as rough sleeping were assisted at the earliest opportunity as part of the ongoing commitment to 'No Second Night Out', the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and official rough sleeping submissions in line with government guidance, priorities and national standard levels which were monitored quarterly as part of the Interagency Strategic Working Group.

Carlisle City Council submitted an annual snapshot figure to the Department of Communities and Local Government to assist in monitoring national levels of rough sleeping. Section 1.7 of the report showed a table of the counts taken in 2014/15 and 2016/17 along with an estimate for 2015/16. On 18 November 2016 Homeless Services and an independent verifier from Homeless Link undertook an official rough sleeper count throughout the hours of 12.30am and 4.00am. 55 locations were searched by 5 teams and one person was recorded and reported as rough sleeping. This person was known to the team and had refused any assistance. The Police had been notified in terms of the individual's welfare and as a public safety measure.

Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services responded to all reports of rough sleeping within Carlisle including actively searching the location(s) reported for the individual and signs of rough sleeping. Where the person was not located a card was left advising that officers were looking to offer assistance and how to make contact should this be required.

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager explained that from September 2015 it was noted that there was an escalating issue with individuals begging within the City Centre who had been assessed as not homeless. Homeless Service managers had been working with officers from Cumbria Police since October 2015 to agree, outline and monitor the effectiveness of joined up approaches to address this. The issues had also been discussed with key stakeholders to monitor, report and advise individuals who were known to their services to seek appropriate help should this be required.

Regular street needs audits had been undertaken jointly with officers from Homeless Prevention and Accommodation services and Cumbria Police since March 2016 to date. Welfare assessments / advice and assistance had been undertaken; and persistent offenders dealt with by positive enforcement by Cumbria Police, resulting in a reported significant reduction in calls to address the issue. As a direct result of this effective joint action taken:

- 4 individuals were given verbal warnings
- 2 individuals were offered housing advice and assistance
- 2 individuals were arrested
- 1 individual was deported

At the last audit carried out in March 2017; there had been no individuals identified, and no individuals rough sleeping or begging had been seen or reported since this date.

This issue was a standing item on the Homeless Strategy Partnership Group and no local concerns were raised at the last meeting held on 26th April 2017. There was an ongoing local commitment with key partners in Carlisle as part of the strategic work to monitor, report and address any future issues and welfare concerns that may arise.

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

- How did the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services deal with someone who was presenting themselves as homeless and did not fall under the Council's statutory responsibility?

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager responded that each individual had to be evaluated on their own personal circumstances. The support offered would depend on a number of factors including availability of accommodation, support the individual required and whether the individual could go back to their home area. As part of the prevention work the team would endeavour to support the individual with partner agencies.

- A Member commented that the work undertaken by the homelessness team with regard to partnership working was outstanding.
- A Member asked for further information on work being undertaken for young people experiencing homelessness.

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager answered that the work supporting young people was wide and varied. The research undertaken which underpinned the four key priority areas in the 2015-20 Strategy identified young people, females in particular, as being at risk of homelessness and/or abuse. The City Council had a joint protocol with Children and Family Services specifically for vulnerable 16/17 year olds. She added that the Council worked closely with partners to ensure this age group were given maximum priority and all agencies had signed up to a 'script' which meant when a young person presented themselves to any of the partner agencies they only had to explain their situation once and all agencies had the same process. In addition the City Council worked with partners to provide accommodation immediately and then work on a long term plan for the individual.

In response to a further question the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager confirmed that the services and support available to young people was promoted through all key partners as well as preventative work being undertaken within schools. The City Council also worked with Children and Family Services to develop a plan for care leavers 12 months prior to them turning 18 to help prevent crisis placements.

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services informed the Panel that Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services had joined his Directorate 18 months ago and they were a really dedicated team led by the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager. The team actively worked to develop partnerships and went above and beyond what was required of them, they always tried to look after people's welfare through excellent care and attitude and the team and the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager were to be highly commended.

The Panel supported the comments made by the Corporate Director.

- Were any of the 55 locations which were searched for rough sleepers in the rural area?

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager confirmed that the locations covered the whole of the Carlisle District.

- A Member noted that there had been a rise in the number of referrals made by partners and the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager felt that this was a positive move. The Council wanted partners to engage individuals at the earliest opportunity to prevent issues rather than being reactive to them.
- The Panel thanked the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager for making the clear distinction in the report between homelessness and begging. There was concern that the increase in begging negatively affected residents emotionally and financially and there needed to be some control to protect the most vulnerable in society.

The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager agreed that the most vulnerable did need to be protected and this included those who were begging. For those begging it was an unpleasant and degrading activity and it was difficult for individuals to find self-worth, especially if they had been begging for a long period of time. All of the work undertaken by the team was to assist individuals to move forward in a positive way.

- The Panel discussed the options available for those who did want to give money and the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services Manager advised that people should donate to a local charity that supported homelessness or to local food banks. She reiterated that giving money or goods which could be sold was not always the best way to help or support individuals.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that she had recently attended a course which detailed the issues surrounding modern slavery. Modern slavery covered many areas including some begging and it was an issue which the Police were carrying out operations to address.

RESOLVED – That the Panel note the ongoing commitment to address multiple exclusion homelessness and rough sleeping as a key priority area outlined within the Interagency Homelessness Strategy for Carlisle 2015-20 (GD.33/17).

COSP.33/17 CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE

The Customer Services Manager presented an update on Customer Services which included the Smarter Service Delivery (SSD) Project, Customer Contact Centre and partnership Working (CE.04/17).

The Customer Services Manager reminded the Panel that the SSD project had been set up initially to meet customer expectations in being able to access City Council services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on line. A new website had been written in plain English with a portal called 'my account'. The portal allowed customers to register and look at various elements of their council tax account, report environmental health problems, access refuse and recycling services, business rate accounts and submit enquiries to green spaces or planning. She added that there were plans to add other services to the 'my account' portal and currently there were over 14,000 signs up for 'my account'.

The second phase of SSD focused on the installation of a Salesforce platform including the replacement of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which required a subscription only and therefore shrank or grew with the required usage. The Salesforce CRM was fully Cloud based and constantly developed at no additional cost; the expected annual savings compared to the current system were £45,000. The Salesforce CRM integrated with 'my account' functions as well as back office systems. This would allow a customer service advisor to access information available on customer requests for service.

A roadmap of the service migration from Capita CRM to Salesforce CRM had been attached to the report.

The Customer Services Manager reported that the customer contact centre face to face function continued to operate from the temporary porta cabin and the telephony section was situated on the fourth floor of the Civic Centre. The division in the services had been challenging but the team had met the challenges with professionalism and enthusiasm for carrying out excellent customer service.

Prior to the December 2015 flood several partner organisations worked within the ground floor of the Civic Centre and customer services staff carried out services on behalf of partner organisations. Some of the partners had chosen not to return to the Civic Centre, however the Department of Works and Pensions Fraud Section provided services from the Civic Centre and Customer Contact staff provided services on behalf of Cumbria Constabulary and Her Majesty's Passport Officer.

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

- A Member recommended that the City Council website have some signposting to out of hours services for social care and children's care.

The Customer Services Manager responded that there were some links within the City Council website to Cumbria County Council services and agreed to look at putting direct links to out of hours services onto the City Council website.

- A Member felt it was important that the Council continued to provide face to face customer service and was concerned that there was no longer a Police presence in the Civic Centre. He asked if Cumbria Constabulary would be returning to the building and, if not, was the Council compensated for the work undertaken on behalf of Cumbria Constabulary.

The Customer Services Manager responded that she was not aware of any plans for Cumbria Constabulary to return to the Civic Centre and confirmed that Cumbria Constabulary contributed £14,000 per annum for the services provided by the Council.

- Was there an update available on the progress with the ground floor of the Civic Centre?

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the Informal Council Briefing scheduled for 13 June would provide Members with an update and an opportunity to put their thoughts and ideas for the ground floor forward.

- Would the IT section require any additional resources to develop and configure the salesforce system in house and would this impact the potential savings?

The Customer Services Manager explained that ICT assessments were being undertaken with managers to plan the IT resources required for the forthcoming year. Following the completion of the assessments IT and the Senior Management Team would then determine whether additional resources would be required. She added that there would be a demonstration of the Salesforce System for Councillors at the Informal Council Briefing on 13 June 2017.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that the changes to the IT systems would allow skills to be directed to other areas and there would be a reorganisation of the budget to allow for some short term funding to be released.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder praised the work being undertaken by the Customer Services Manager and her team, especially under the circumstances following the flood.

RESOLVED – That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel endorse the proposals within report CE.04/17 of supporting further development of Salesforce CRM to combine the use of new and emerging digital service delivery to enable efficiencies as well as continue to meet ever changing customer expectations. The Panel also endorse the addition of partnership working opportunities to enable the Civic Centre to become a true community hub for Carlisle.

COSP.34/17 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted report PC.08/17 containing the fourth quarter performance against the current service standards and a summary of the Carlisle Plan 2015-18 actions as defined in the 'plan on a page'.

The Policy and Performance Officer added that the a brief overview of the current position with regard to the Carlisle Plan had been included in the report and it only included actions which sat under the remit of the Panel. He reminded the Panel that performance reporting options workshops had been planned for Members on 20 June 2017.

A Member asked what the authority was doing as part of the SugarSmart project and how would it link in to public health. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council had received external funding for two Sustainable Food Cities projects and as a result the appointment of a Sustainable Food Cities Co-ordinator was taking place. The Council would sign up to a SugarSmart declaration with other Districts, in addition the Council sat on the Healthy City Steering Group.

Members discussed the option of changing the target for the Service Standard: Average number of days to process new benefits claims and agreed to discuss the matter further at the Workshop on 20 June.

RESOLVED – The Panel considered the performance of the City Council presented in report PC.08/17 with a view to seeking continuous improvement in how the Council delivers its priorities.

COSP.35/17 POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 2016/17

Councillor Bowditch, as the City Council's representative on the Cumbria Police and Crime Panel, submitted a review of the Panel's work for 2016/17.

Councillor Bowditch reminded the Panel of his role and reported that the Panel had met four times to discuss a number of issues. 2016/17 saw the election of a new Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Peter McCall, and the Panel worked with him in the development of the new Police and Crime Plan. The Panel also confirmed the appointment of a new Chief Finance Officer who scrutinised the Commissioners council tax precept along with a number of other issues.

Councillor Bowditch highlighted the areas which were discussed at each meeting of the Panel, as detailed in the report, along with further information of the appointment of the Joint Chief Finance Officer and the council tax precept.

He summed up by outlining the additional issues which the Panel had considered in the last twelve months, highlighting the issues that had been raised regarding the 101 numbers. There had been concern about the low response rate to the number and he had been assured that the issues were being addressed and the response rate was improving. He reminded the Panel that the Police had a 40% reduction in their budget for Cumbria and suggested that it may be beneficial for the Panel to invite the Police and Crime Commissioner to a meeting to discuss issues.

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

- One of the objectives presented by the PCC had been 'Support Today's Young People'; was there any further information on what this meant?

Councillor Bowditch agreed to provide a written response to the Panel.

- A Member highlighted the issues regarding the 101 number and the impact it had on those who had reported an incident or been a victim of a crime. He also raised the issues of anti-social behaviour that had occurred in the City Centre which he felt were not being treated as a priority. He urged Councillor Bowditch, as the City Council representative, to keep highlighting the issues and pushing for improvement wherever possible.
- Members raised the issue of reporting methods for representatives on external bodies and felt that there should be a process for representatives, in particular those on the PCC and the Health Scrutiny Panel, to report back to the Executive or for them to have a bigger role in discussions that affected the areas within the remits of the external bodies.

RESOLVED –1) That the summary of the work of the Police and Crime Panel 2016-2017, provided by Councillor Bowditch, be welcomed;

2) That the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Superintendent be invited to attend the Panel at a future date;

3) That Councillor Bowditch provide a written response regarding the 'Support Today's Young People' objective.

4) That a clear methodology be established which enabled City Council representatives on the Police and Crime Panel and the Health Scrutiny Panel two way communication between the Executive and the Panels and engaged representatives in discussions regarding issues within their remit.

COSP.36/17 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.12/17 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 Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 5 May 2017 and included the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan (KD.05/17) which fell within the remit of the Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer stated that the Panel's work programme had been attached to the report and, following a written response to the Panel regarding financial data for the Old Fire Station, the Panel was asked to view if it wanted a full written report on the matter to their next meeting on 20 July 2017. The Panel discussed the matter and agreed that the written response addressed the issues raised. They agreed that a future update, in a similar format, should be added to the work programme.

It was also proposed that Directors and Portfolio Holders be invited to the next Panel meeting to aid the Panel in defining their work programme for the year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that a request had been received from a member of the public, via the Town Clerk and Chief Executive; the Panel consider conducting a review into 'Affordable Ways of Improving Provision of Public Toilets in the City'.

Members were reminded that there was a renewed focus on effective member-led and policy scrutiny and to assist Members, two training sessions were being provided by the LGiU on 27 June 2017.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to this Panel (OS.12/17) be noted.

2) That an update on the Old Fire Station be added to the work programme for a future meeting of the Panel.

3) That Directors and Portfolio Holders be invited to attend the Panel's meeting on 20 July 2017 to aid the Panel in defining their work programme for the year.

4) That a review on 'Affordable Ways of Improving Provision of Public Toilets in the City' be considered by the Panel on 20 July as part of their work programme setting.

(Meeting ended at 12.13pm)