

**People Panel**

**Date:** Thursday, 09 June 2022

**Time:** 10:10

**Venue:** Flensburg Room

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Christine Finlayson, Councillor Colin Glover, Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell, Councillor Mrs Linda Mitchell, Councillor David Shepherd, Councillor Miss Jeanette Whalen, Councillor Christopher Wills

**Also Present:** Cllr J Mallinson - Leader

Cllr Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

Cllr Mrs Mallinson - Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

**Officers:**

Deputy Chief Executive

Corporate Director of Finance and Resources

Head of Communities and Wellbeing

Healthy City Team Manager

Head of Human Resources

Policy and Communications Manager

Overview and Scrutiny Officer

**PEP.01/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were submitted.

**PEP.02/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillor Mrs Mitchell declared an interest in respect of A.3 - Sands Centre Redevelopment - Programme Update and Plans for reopening. The interest related to a relative being a member of the swimming club committee.

**PEP.03/22 PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED - That the items in Part A be dealt with in public and the items in private be dealt with in Part B.

**PEP.04/22 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

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

## PEP.05/22 PROVISIONAL GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2021/22

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.03/22 summarising the 2021/22 provisional outturn for the General Fund revenue budget, giving reasons for variances. An overview of transfers to earmarked reserves and funding of the carry forward requests in 2022/23 was given, noting that once accounted for, the outturn position would result in a net overall contribution to General Fund Reserves of £17,000.

The information contained within the report was provisional, subject to the formal audit process. The Draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 would be presented to the Audit Committee on 8 July 2022, with final approval of the audited accounts anticipated on 28 September 2022.

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

- With reference to the underspend and income shortfall in Homelessness Accommodation a Member asked whether the 'cost of living crisis' was likely to impact that position and if an associated pressure had been included in the budget?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that a £100,000 pressure had been approved by Council in February for the 2022/23 budget. The Service Manager would be best placed to advise how that pressure was to be met.

- Were any of the various under and overspends detailed in the report a cause for concern in the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), for example shortfall of income at The Lanes and the Market Hall?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources explained that there was some concern in relation to the income shortfalls indicated by the Member which it was anticipated economic recovery following the lifting of Covid 19 pandemic restrictions would begin to address. In terms of budget monitoring, pressures had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for a shortfall in income for both The Lanes and the Market Hall for the next three years.

As part of the LGR process the MTFPs of all sovereign Councils would be considered as part of the development of the Cumberland Council budget, the Corporate Director was confident that the City Council's MTFP incorporated the relevant shortfalls.

- What was the anticipated impact of Copeland Borough Council's budgetary position on Cumberland Council?

The Corporate Director advised that both new unitary authorities would have to be financially sustainable, an aspect of which was having identified risks incorporated into their respective MTFPs. The Interim Section 151 Officers for the respective Shadow Authorities were working with CIPFA in the form of Financial Sustainability Board to determine how the budgets of the sovereign councils would be linked to form balanced budgets for the two new authorities; that work would consider all aspects of local authority finance. Risks to the new authorities' finances were being captured by the LGR programme Board.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that whilst the issues relating to Copeland's budgetary position was a factor in the setting up of the budget for Cumberland Council, however, in the context of the disaggregation of Cumbria County Council's finances, it was unlikely to be destabilising.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for her presentation of the report and responses to questions. In relation to the Homelessness Accommodation budget pressure, he considered it would be useful for Members to be given reassurance on the issue and requested that written information on the matter be circulated to the Panel by the Service Manager. He further noted that Housing came under the remit of the Place Panel but considered that there were aspects of the Council's service delivery that ought to be

scrutinised by the People Panel.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Provisional General Fund Outturn 2021/22 be noted.

2) That the Homelessness Accommodation Manager write to the Panel setting out how the £100,000 budget pressure was to be addressed and what impact the cost of living crisis may have on the matter.

## **PEP.06/22 PROVISIONAL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2021/22 AND REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23**

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.04/22 summarising the 2021/22 the provisional outturn for the Council's Capital Budget; and providing details of the revised Capital Programme for 2022/23. The outturn showed that the net underspend for Council services as at 31 March 2022, once committed expenditure totalling £7,106,700 was taken into account, was £364,314.

Details of the resources which had been utilised to fund the 2021/22 Capital Programme, together with the 5 year Capital Programme for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 were also provided. The 2022/23 programme would be continually reviewed to ensure the Council had the capacity to deliver that level of programme. The information contained within the report was provisional and subject to the formal audit process.

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

- A number of programmes listed within the report were subject to ring fenced funding, would the ring fencing be carried over to the Cumberland Council and had any contingency for cost escalation been incorporated?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources confirmed the ring fenced funds for the projects would continue to be set aside, with reference to the Future High Streets Fund and Borderlands Projects other authorities subject to LGR would also have financial involvement. Some of the schemes were being delivered by the Council's partners who would be liable for any cost overruns. The Corporate Director indicated that she did not have specific details relating to those matters to hand, but should the Panel require it was able to circulate written information to Members.

- There were a number of projects within the Capital Programme that were not in keeping with the anticipated timeline or budget, was the project management being effective in its delivery?

The Corporate Director responded that it was not unusual for costs and timelines to exceed those originally set out. The Council's Project Board was responsible for monitoring the delivery of projects a report on the matter was regularly submitted to the former Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel. Risk assessments would be carried on existing projects that would not be completed by the end of March 2023, with any issues identified being included in the Council's Risk Register.

- Regarding the additional Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) funding, had the new monies been allocated?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources advised that the additional funding had only recently been announced and was allocated by the Better Care Fund from Cumbria County Council. The allocation of the monies would be monitored through these reports going forward which would be submitted on a quarterly basis; any unspent were anticipated to be retained under the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy. The Corporate Director undertook to write to the Panel with details of how any monies not spent on DFGs would be used.

The Chair welcomed the report.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Provisional Capital Outturn 2021/22 and Revised Capital Programme 2022/23 be noted.

- 2) That the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources provide written information to the Panel regarding:
- i) The financial contingencies in place for the Future High Street Fund projects;
  - ii) The potential use of monies allocated for Disabled Facilities Grants that had not been used.

## **PEP.07/22 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2021/22**

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.05/22 providing the annual report on Treasury Management, as required under both the Financial Procedure Rules and the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. Also included was the regular report on Treasury Transactions.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for her comprehensive report.

RESOLVED - That the Treasury Management Outturn 2021/22 be received.

## **PEP.08/22 COUNCIL TAX PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2021/22**

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.06/22 which summarised the 2021/22 provisional outturn and performance position for Council Tax and set out the Council Tax Collection Fund budget along with the Council's Council Tax collection performance and NNDR Provisional Outturn as at 31 March 2022.

The Chair asked for clarification of the term 'write-on'.

The Corporate Director explained that the term referred to where a debt had formerly been written off and was the reinstated due to the debt re-establishing contact and making further payments.

RESOLVED - That the Council Tax Provisional Outturn 2021/22 be noted.

## **PEP.09/22 ELECTED MEMBER'S ALLOWANCES - PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2021/22**

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.07/22 setting out the amount of allowances paid to Members as part of the Elected Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22. She advised that £271,663 had been paid in allowances to individual Members which represented an underspend of £17,937, the reasons for which were provided at Section 2.

RESOLVED - That the Elected Member's Allowance Provisional Outturn 2021/22 be noted.

## **PEP.10/22 SANDS CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT – PROGRAMME UPDATE AND PLANS FOR REOPENING**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted report CS.22/22 which set out the progress being made in relation to the main Sands Centre redevelopment contract. The report gave an overview of the following areas: Main contract programme update; overview of activities relating to the events centre; early development of reopening plans; and, impact of the decant from The Pools and former Newman School facilities.

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

- What consideration had been given to offers that may be made available to residents of the district, for example a 'Carlisle Leisure Card'?

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that he had seen the pricing structure which was clear and well considered and included offers for those in need.

In response to a request for clarification of the terms 'sectional' and 'practical' completion, the Deputy Chief Executive defined each, noting that the project team had drawn up a list of actions required to realise sectional completion.

- A criticism of the former events centre was a lack of ambience or atmosphere, were GLL entirely responsible for that aspect of the facility?

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that under the leisure contract GLL were effectively leaseholders of the facility and so had some responsibility for decor and equipment. The Council was the landlord with responsibility for the structure of the building which also had an impact on ambience. It was anticipated that further capital investment may be needed to install additional features.

- With regard to club use of the sports facilities at the site, for example the Aquatics Club, would such users be required to provide their own equipment?

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that there had been significant discussion on that matter; in the case of the Aquatics Club larger physical capacity items such as timing pads would be provided by GLL in the pools and so would be available for Club use. The Council did not currently have monies available to install equipment to make the facility to competition standard, but would look to improve the equipment available over time.

The Head of Communities and Wellbeing added that discussions between GLL, the Aquatics Club and himself on the matter were ongoing.

- Was there potential to increase the range of facilities available for events in the future?

The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the matter was dependent on the market need and other facilities available in the district. There were a number of constraints at the site including location and proximity to the river.

- How was the planned delivery of NHS services at the facility developing?

Discussions were ongoing between the NHS and GLL and a good relationship had developed between the two organisations. The NHS was currently delivering its services from the Former Newman School site and discussions were currently centred on the likely time of its decant from the facility.

Members discussed the imposition of booking fees for event ticket.

- What progress had been made in relation to the transfer of The Pools site as part of the Borderlands Station Gateway project?

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that a meeting was scheduled in the coming week with Officers at Cumbria County Council, which was the authority leading the project, where it was hoped that further information regarding the timeline for the project would be set out. That information was important to the Friends of Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths who were in the process of developing a Business Case for the Baths. The Friends were scheduled to present its case to the Panel at its August 2022 meeting, Officers were in regular dialogue with The Friends.

In response to a further question from the Chair regarding the potential for GLL to continue to staff the Turkish Baths following the decant of staff at the Pools to the Sands Centre, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed the matter was under discussion, but without the timeline for the Station Gateway Project a final decision was not able to be made.

- Would the redeveloped Sands Centre have public transport access?

The Deputy Chief Executive hoped that would be the case. However, there were a number of challenges to overcome: the re-organisation of services in light of changes to subsidies from Cumbria County Council; and, the unknown income potential for service providers. Officers, Members and operators were in discussion on the matter which was ultimately a decision for the providers of the service.

In terms of the opening plans, the Deputy Chief Executive indicated that the 'soft opening' was a matter of weeks away, prior to that a visit to the facility by the Panel would be arranged. Members' suggestions for the formal, ceremonial opening of the facility were invited.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and summarised the key points of the Panel's discussion which contained several areas for Officers to feedback GLL as set out above.

RESOLVED - 1) That Sands Centre Redevelopment - Programme Update and Plans for re-opening be welcomed.

2) That arrangements be made for the Panel to undertake a site visit of the Sands Centre prior to the soft opening.

## **PEP.11/22 HEALTHY CITY 2022/23 PROGRAMME AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BROADENING APPROACH BEYOND 2023**

The Head of Communities and Wellbeing submitted report CS.23/22 that updated the Panel on the work of the Council's Healthy City Team in 2021/22; a verbal summary of a number of examples of work and projects was given. An overview of programmed work for 2022/23 was set out and the report further highlighted work that would continue beyond March 2023.

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

- A number of Members questioned whether the work of the team was being made known through the LGR process as they felt it was very valuable and likely to be taken forward by the new authority.

The Head of Communities and Wellbeing explained that the work of the team was being fed into the work packages relevant to the service so that it may be taken forward appropriately. Were the new Cumberland Council to decide it wished to take forward any aspect of the team's work, officers were prepared and excited to be able to deliver it, and there was the potential that the Healthy City approach could be delivered across the wider footprint.

In response to a request from a Member for an update on the Waverley Viaduct, the Leader responded that the project was not a Council one but that it being led by The Friends of the Waverley Viaduct. The Leader had met with the Railway's Footpath Trust who were happy to support the project. The Council had made an offer of support to the Friends which remained open, however, Cumbria County Council was the Highway Authority and so was responsible for approving the footpath.

- Was funding available to secure the use of a high street premises for a Health and Wellbeing hub?

The Head of Communities and Wellbeing responded that potential funding opportunities were being identified, including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Were any monies to be secured there were several partners ready to work together to deliver the Hub.

The Healthy City Team Manager emphasised the importance of partnership working and drawing in communities to make any future Health and Wellbeing Hub a success. The project had great potential to positively impact residents and the vitality of the high street. Were funding

to be secured it was likely that a trial hub would be set up initially, were it to prove successful a facility in the rural area may be considered.

The Chair asked whether GP practices had been approached to see if they were able to support the proposal?

The Healthy City Team Manager responded that local social prescribing would be a significant aspect of the offer. The Hub would focus on helping people to incorporate measures to prevent the deterioration of health to reduce the need to visit their GP and would be based on facilitation and encouragement. Discussions with the NHS would take place at the appropriate time.

- Was the proposed development of a Volunteering Strategy work that would be undertaken by the City Council or the new Cumberland Council?

The Head of Communities and Wellbeing advised that the work would be commenced by City Council and taken forward to the Cumberland Council and its partners.

- How were community centres to be supported going forward and the outcomes that they had provided retained?

The Head of Communities and Wellbeing considered that they had potential to fit with the Hubs and would be taken forward to the new Cumberland Council.

Members discussed the role of community centres and the provision of affordable food for residents and the wider benefits that provided in terms of social interaction and information sharing.

Food provision was anticipated to be an aspect of the Hubs, the Healthy City Manager advised that it would need to be adaptable to encompass a range of cultural needs.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the location of the 'Space to Talk' project, the Healthy City Manager stated that it took place every Friday in front of the Old Town Hall and issued many 'Bags of Courage'. She further noted that a 'Thriving Communities' exhibition was to be held at Tullie House from 1 July 2022 which all Members were welcome to attend, an email with details would be circulated in due course.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the team's work, and welcomed the theme of 'healthy city' being expanded to healthy county region. He proposed that the Local Government Reorganisation Transition Portfolio Holder be invited to a future meeting of the Panel to talk to Members about the development and initiation of plans for Cumberland Council. The Panel indicated its assent.

The Chair offered the Panel's support to Officers, Members and groups working with Cumberland Council by sharing its experience. He expressed support for the Health and Wellbeing Hubs and recognised the importance of partnership working in delivering outcomes.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Healthy City 2022/23 Programme and opportunities for broadening approach beyond 2023 be noted with thanks.

2) That the Healthy City Manager circulated to Members of the Panel details of the Thriving Communities exhibition being held at Tullie House.

3) That the Local Government Reorganisation Transition Portfolio Holder be invited to a future meeting of the Panel, at the appropriate time, to discuss areas within the Panel's remit.

### **PEP.12/22 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT END OF YEAR 2021/22**

The Head of Human Resources submitted the report CS.21/22 which detailed the authority's sickness absence levels and other sickness absence information for the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

A Member-led Task and Finish Group had developed a revised Improving Attendance Policy in 2021/22 which had been formally adopted by the Employment Panel at its meeting of 14 September 2022. The policy would support managers and employees with improving attendance, it was anticipated that revised policy would begin to yield benefits early in 2022/23.

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

- What mechanisms were in place to support employees who potentially faced losing their employment due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations would be applicable to the migration of staff from the existing councils to the new unitary authority. Once Cumberland Council was in operation it would likely undertake transformation processes to rationalise the operation of the organisation.

- What mechanisms were available to staff to discuss their individual aspirations for their future careers

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that staff were able to partake in such discussions through a variety of means e.g. appraisals, one to one meetings with their manager. Further support in terms of training was also available to staff.

The Panel discussed the appraisal process.

The Chair welcomed the report and the support being offered to staff in relation to LGR.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Sickness Absence Report End of Year 2021/22 be noted.

### **PEP.13/22 STANDING ORDERS**

RESOLVED - That Council Procedural Rule 9, in relation to the duration of meetings be suspended in order that the meeting could continue over the 3 hour time limit.

### **PEP.14/22 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22**

The Policy and Communications Manager presented the End of Year 2021/22 performance against the current Service Standards and a summary of the Carlisle Plan 2021-23 actions as defined in the 'plan on a page'. Performance against the Panel's 2021/22 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were also included.



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

- The activity of works for the Carlisle Southern Relief Road (CSLR) seemed to have slowed in pace recently, was the project still moving forward?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder advised that works were being undertaken on an incremental basis as not all contracts had been finalised, ground works and Compulsory Purchase Orders were ongoing.

The Policy and Communications Manager undertook to liaise with the Corporate Director of Economic Development on the matter and circulate further information to the Panel.

RESOLVED - 1) That the End of Year Performance Report 2021/22 be welcomed.

2) That the Policy and Communications Manager circulate to the Panel further information regarding the progress of the Carlisle Southern Relief Road project.

## **PEP.15/22 OVERVIEW REPORT**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.15/22 which provided an overview of matters relating to the work of the People Panel.

Paragraph 4 of the report noted that, in a work planning session the Chair had indicated a wish to include an item on the Work Programme - Youth Engagement in Civic Life: the Panel indicated its agreement to the item being incorporated.

The Chair hoped that during the course of the year a joint session with the Place Panel may be held to scrutinise matters relating to housing. A Member commented that they would like to see included in that item the impact of refugees and the effect on residents.

Regarding the CAB update on work and issues for local residents, Members indicated a wish for the item to include information of food security. The Healthy City Manager advised that there was a Food Security Group which was attended by Officers, she undertook to liaise with the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to identify an Officer to contribute to that item.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Overview Report, incorporating Key Decision items relevant to the People Panel be noted.

2) That the CAB update on work and issues for local residents report incorporate information on food security, and that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and the Healthy City Team Manager liaise to identify an Officer to contribute to that item.

The Meeting ended at: 13:24