



Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Date: Thursday, 14 October 2021

Time: 10:00

Venue: Council Chamber

Present: Councillor Mrs Christine Finlayson, Councillor Colin Glover, Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell, Councillor Peter Sunter, Councillor Miss Jeanette Whalen
Councillor John Collier (for Councillor David Shepherd)

Also Present: Councillor Mallinson (J) - Leader

Councillor Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

Councillor Mrs Mallinson - Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio

Holder

Councillor Christian - Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder

Councillor Nedved - Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive

Regulatory Services Manager

Policy and Communications Manager

Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Mr Gale - Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership Manager

Councillor Mrs Christine Finlayson chaired the meeting in the absence of Councillor John Paton.

HWSP.62/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Jack Paton, Councillor David Shepherd and Councillor Mrs Valerie Tarbitt.

HWSP.63/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

HWSP.64/21 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and items of business in Part B be dealt with in private.

HWSP.65/21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - 1) It was noted that Council, on 14 September 2021, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021. The Chair signed the minutes.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2021 be agreed.

HWSP.66/21 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

HWSP.67/21 ZERO CARBON CUMBRIA PARTNERSHIP

The Policy and Communications Manager presented an update on the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership (ZCCP) (PC.37/21) and introduced Mr Gale, Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership (ZCCP), Partnership Manager, to the meeting.

The Policy and Communications Manager reported that the ZCCP was a cross sector partnership made up of more than 70 committed organisations, community groups and individuals. The Group was co-chaired by Cumbria Action for Sustainability and Cumbria County Council. The report set out the projects that the ZCCP had been involved in and its governance arrangements.

Mr Gale gave a presentation covering: the membership of the ZCCP; Cumbria's annual residential CO₂ footprint; local authority CO₂ emissions; ZCCP Governance structure; options realising carbon net zero by 2037; links between the ZCCP and the Cumbria Public Health Strategy; key next steps for the Partnership; Cumbria's strengths and identifying co-benefits.

In considering the report and presentation members raised the following comments and questions:

- Were all members of the partnership equally on board with its work and did they recognise the level of challenge it faced?

Mr Gale responded that there was variation between members of the partnership with regards to how on board they were with the Partnership, however, each recognised the level of challenge the Partnership faced. A purpose of the Partnership was to encourage its members to work together in different ways and it intended to work with businesses to build in carbon reduction measures to the post Covid 19 pandemic recovery.

- What connections existed within the Partnership to encourage the adoption of best practice ways of working and to encourage the lessons were learnt by board members?

Mr Gale commented that the Partnership was rare in its very broad membership, the communication of best practices was central to the work of the organisation; the Cumbria Sustainability Network was the primary source of sharing best practice and providing opportunities for collaboration.

- Was data available on the progress of measure to retro-fit existing domestic properties in the county to increase their energy efficiency, and what financial help would be available to carry out the work for low income households?

Mr Gale considered the matter of retro-fitting to be a big challenge in realising carbon zero. It was an issue where he expected national government would look to provide financial assistance schemes rather than locally based ones. He gave an overview of some local projects which had secured national funding to help with domestic property carbon reduction.

- Did any of the Partnership's work streams address waste minimisation?

Mr Gale advised that a sector group was looking into the matter and the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership had a waste reduction and carbon minimisation plan.

- A number of Partnerships were also considering addressing the issue of climate change, how was duplication of work being avoided?

Mr Gale explained that the ZCCP had conducted a mapping exercise to understand work already being undertaken to avoid work being duplicated. Moreover, the ZCCP was keen to support and bring together a broad range of sectors to address the issues relating to climate change, including health. He noted that Mr Cox, the Director of Public Health in Cumbria had formerly chaired the ZCCP.

- What level of engagement did the ZCCP have with local businesses and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)?

Mr Gale stated that the LEP was a member of the ZCCP and it was looking at how to connect recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic to the development of skills necessary to increase "green jobs". In terms of links with individual businesses, there was as yet little activity, he noted that businesses working in the visitor economy sector were engaging with Cumbria Tourism on ways to reduce the carbon footprint of the sector.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio recognised that the ZCCP was in its early days, he welcomed the work to develop skills to support the generation of the green economy as it had the potential to create new job opportunities.

- Did the ZCCP have a marketing plan to encourage public engagement with its agenda and schemes?

Mr Gale considered that public engagement was a critical aspect of the ZCCP work. A recent tranche of National Lottery Funding had enabled the ZCCP to employ a part time Communications and Marketing Manager whose role would be to develop the ZCCP website and work with Partnership members to build a programme of community engagement.

- In relation to land use and farming, the Environment Agency were now focusing on upstream flood management, would the ZCCP be involved in that area?

Mr Gale responded that effective engagement with the farming community was essential. The changes to the sector following Brexit and a new national pay scheme had the potential to be beneficial for the climate change agenda.

- What incentives could the ZCCP offer residents to make changes that would reduce their carbon footprint?

Mr Gale explained that "fair transition" or "climate justice" was a key issue in supporting the transition to carbon zero particularly in relation to low income households. The issue was being considered and built into sector plans which would have a different way of approaching matters, for example viewing transport as a service rather than infrastructure. 16 programmes had received funding from the Climate action Fund to support the work.

The Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder noted that the Council's Cycling and Walking Strategy was about to be published which he hoped would help in starting to change thinking on transport. Turning to the issue of electric vehicle charging, he noted that there was likely

to be increased demand for points at domestic properties and that consideration needed to be given to the rates charged at commercial and domestic sites.

Mr Gale noted that work had been carried out to map a baseline of existing charging points within the county and the requirements needed to be met to help reach carbon zero by 2037. Consideration needed to be given as to how best to support commercial and domestic properties in the county as well as visitors.

- How was the Partnership engaging with young people?

Mr Gale advised that a Climate Change Youth Summit had been arranged for 15 October 2021 which would commence the process of engagement with young people. There was also a Youth Climate Action Programme being developed which would seek to include those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with Learning Disabilities.

A Member commented that he was aware of anxiety amongst young people in relation to the impact of Climate Change. Members discussed their concerns about the potential negative impact on people's mental health in relation to concerns about Climate Change and emphasised the need for accurate and balanced reporting and information on the matter.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder noted that there was an amount of partnership work already going on in relation to climate change, including through the Carlisle Partnership which included a young persons representative. She thanked all partners involved in that work.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder commented on the Council's evolving approach to new developments in the district, particularly in relation to the St Cuthbert's Garden Village; Members considered the need for planning policy at national and local level to be adapted so that it was able to support the transition to zero carbon.

- In relation to Climate Change Citizen's Juries, a Member commented that these were often perceived as being an "eco-warrior" forum; he asked if Mr Gale was able to circulate to the Panel some information on the actions undertaken by the ones already set up in Cumbria.

Mr Gale undertook to do so and noted that Kendal and Copeland had each set up a Jury and that Barrow were planning to. The membership of the juries was random and therefore potentially would make connections with those who had been hard to engage on the matter; provide feedback on their work to local authorities would enable them to incorporate that into their thinking

The Member further commented that as part of the Council's Climate Emergency declaration it had been agreed that a Climate Change Citizen's Jury would be set up in the district he urged the Executive to look at the matter and commence community engagement so that the issue could be taken forward. He further requested that Officers considered including Climate Change in the Corporate Implications section of Council reports so that environmental impacts could be noted.

The Vice Chair thanked Mr Gale for his presentation. She proposed the following resolutions for the Panel:

- That Mr Gale circulate to the Panel information on the work and actions of the existing Climate Change Citizens' Juries in Cumbria;
- That Officers considered the inclusion of Climate Change in the Corporate Implications section of Council Committee reports.

A Member commented that he had requested that the Panel resolve to urge the Executive to set up a Climate Change Citizens' Jury in the district.

The Vice Chair responded that the resolution had not been formally put and seconded.

The Member proposed that the Panel recommend to the Executive that it set up a Climate Change Citizens' Jury in the district. The proposal was seconded. The Vice Chair put the matter to the vote, whereupon the numbers cast for and against the proposal were equal. The Vice Chair used her casting vote and the motion fell.

The Member expressed strong concerns that, in his view a Member of the Executive had tried to influence the Panel.

The Vice Chair responded that she had made her decision on the proposal entirely independently.

The Member expressed disappointment that the proposal had not been taken forward.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Panel had considered and commented on the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership update (PC.37/21).

2) That Mr Gale circulate to the Panel information on the work and actions of the existing Climate Change Citizens' Juries in Cumbria.

3) That Officers consider the inclusion of Climate Change in the Corporate Implications sections of Council Committee reports.

HWSP.68/21 HOUSING ASSISTANCE GRANTS - DFGS, REPAIR ASSISTANCE AND EMPTY PROPERTY GRANTS

The Regulatory Services Manager presented an update on the Housing Assistance Grants delivered in 2020/21 by Regulatory Services' Housing and Pollution and Homelife Teams. (GD.53/21)

The Regulatory Services Manager set out the background to the funding for housing grants, the types of grants, the criteria as established in the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2018. The report detailed the Carlisle Housing Assistance for 2021/22 and the impact that world markets and the pandemic had on delivery.

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

- Did the Council have any insight into how Registered Social Landlords (RSL) within the district addressed issues of property adaptation?

The Regulatory Services Manager responded that if a tenant of an RSL applied to the Council for a Housing Assistance Grant it would have to be considered, as with any application relating to a rental property, the property owner would need to be consulted before any works were agreed. An RSL may consider other issues for example whether the property their tenant resided in was suitable and whether relocation may be an option. The Council had formerly carried out adaptations to Riverside properties, however, they had now undertaken their own works for a number of years.

- Did the Grants allow for the provision of technical solutions to support people with non-physical needs adaptations, for example dementia?

The Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that 'dementia friendly' grants were available as was the provision of technology. In order to receive a grant an applicant was required to meet the scheme criteria for whatever type of grant had been applied for.

The Member further asked whether the Housing Assistance Grants were able to meet any revenue costs associated with an adaptation?

The Regulatory Services Manager stated that some Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) were capital grants. There were some circumstances where a specific time limited project had been identified that would permit the grant to be used to pay for revenue costs e.g. the Hospital Discharge Post. However, usually, any revenue costs associated with an adaptation such as power supplies would be funded by monies from Adult Social Care budgets.

- Had the delivery of the Housing Assistance Grants been impacted by supplier and materials issues?

The Regulatory Services Manager stated that there had been an impact in terms of an increase in materials costs to contractors and contractors were needing to pay more to retain staff. A revision of the Grants Framework was having to be considered as the existing Frameworks prices set 2 years ago were understandably causing issues. Demand for the grants had not been impacted and it was likely that this year's allocation will be spent.

- How were adaptations compliance with the Homes for Life standards checked?

Building Control processes and legislation were applied to certify adaptations delivered under the new housing schemes.

In response to a further question from the Member regarding the future proofing of homes on new housing developments, the Regulatory Services Manager noted that the issue presented a challenge; matters such as doorway widths and stairs were often lower than that which would be provided for by an adaptation. Therefore, DFGs were perceived as useful in respect to current adaptations needs.

- Were heat pumps practical for older properties?

The Regulatory Services Manager advised that the suitability of an adaptation related to the particular circumstances of an individual property, he expected the contractors used to deliver works for housing grants to be of a standard to make a qualified judgement on such matters.

- What was the average time taken for the Council to process grants?

The Regulatory Services Manager reported that in the previous year, for mandatory scheme grants the number of days from receipt of an application was, on average 84 days; for discretionary grants 62 days. He undertook to circulate to the Panel the corresponding data for the current year.

- The Grants were funded by a variety of sources, did Officers have to seek those out?

The Regulatory Services Manager stated that there were a number of ways Officers identified funding streams including networking and email circulars. Not all pots of funding would be suitable and the Council only followed up those where it considered it had a reasonable chance of securing monies.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder thanked the Regulatory Services Manager and his team for the work carried out in respect of Housing Assistance Grants.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder drew the Panel's attention to the case studies contained in the report and noted the range of adaptations the grants covered.

The Vice Chair commented that through the current and previous reports on Housing Assistance Grants it was clear to see the difference the grants made to peoples lives, she applauded the work of the team.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Housing Assistance Grants update be noted (GD.53/21)

2) That the Regulatory Services Manager circulate to the Panel information on the time taken to process grants in the current year.

HWSP.69/21 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.25/21 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel.

In relation to the 'Progress on resolutions from previous meetings" section of the report the Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that HWSP.41/21 (2) That future monitoring of the 2037 baseline and appropriate Key Performance Indicator be included in the Panel's regular performance reports; the action had been agreed by the Task and Finish Group on Performance reporting, were the Panel to agree the matter it would be closed.

The consultation paper on the Carlisle Plan had been appended to the report to Council in September 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate it to the Panel (HWSP.49/21 refers).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave an update from the Scrutiny Chairs Group where, in relation to the Future Scrutiny Arrangements Task and Finish Group, the Chair of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel had been keen for the Group to have cross-party engagement. The following Members had indicated a willingness to sit on the Task and Finish Group: Councillor Bainbridge, Councillor Allison, Councillor Meller and Councillor Finlayson. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer invited a member of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel to participate in the Group. Councillor McKerrell indicated that she was willing to sit on the Task and Finish Group. The Panel agreed.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel be noted (OS.25/21).

2) That Councillor McKerrell participate in the Future Scrutiny Arrangements Task and Finish Group.

3) That the Overview and Scrutiny Officer circulate the consultation paper on the Carlisle Plan to the Panel.

The Meeting ended at: 12:00