

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2013 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Layden (Chairman), Councillors Bainbridge, Bowditch, Mrs Franklin (as substitute for Councillor Watson), Graham, Nedved and Whalen.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Bloxham – Observer
Councillor Glover – Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder
Councillor Hendry – Agenda Item 5 – Draft Carlisle Plan 2013-2016

OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Economic Development
Director of Local Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Policy and Communications Officer

EEOSP.11/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors McDevitt and Watson. Apologies were also submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Martlew – Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder.

EEOSP.12/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

EEOSP.13/13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – (1) That the minutes of the meetings held on 29 November 2012 and 17 January 2013 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

(2) That the Tourist Information Working Group be reinstated to monitor the Tourist Information Centre whilst in temporary premises and that reports be submitted every 6 months to ensure Members are aware of any potential issues with regard to the fabric of the building.

EEOSP.14/13 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

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

EEOSP.15/13 OVERVIEW REPORT INCORPORATING THE WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.06/13 which provided an overview of matters related to the work of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Details of the latest version of the work programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Panel were also included.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that:

- The Notice of Key Executive Decisions had been published on 8 February 2013. The items that related to the work of this Panel were:
 - KD.037/12 – Carlisle Plan – to be considered by the Panel later in the meeting.
 - KD.01/13 – Change from purple sacks to wheeled bins – the Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder had decided that the matter should be put out to consultation before being considered by the Executive at a future meeting. The Director of Local Environment advised that following consultation a report would be presented to the Panel on 13 June 2013 prior to consideration by the Executive. All affected properties would be consulted.
- The following Minute Excerpts had been received from the Executive's meeting held on 11 February 2013:
 - Minute Excerpt EX.14/13 –Business Interaction Centre – the Executive had noted the recommendations from the Panel.

The Director of Economic Development advised that she had met with representatives from the university with regard to the City Council having representation on the university board. The Director had also written to the university requesting information about the process of appointing to the board; to date she was still awaiting a response. The Director confirmed that the university would not be given the agreed £100,000 until the university had responded to issues raised in the letter.

The Director explained that representatives were appointed to the board on an individual basis and had to apply on that basis. Therefore the representative would not be representing the Council. If the information in the university's response to the Director's letter confirmed that, the Deputy Chief Executive suggested that a reply be sent via the Executive advising that the Council believed there should be some representation on the board.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder had made it clear that as part of the Council's ambition as a university city the Council should have representation on the board. If the university confirmed that the representative should not represent the Council, Members would need to investigate other ways to deal with the issue.

The Ward Councillor stated that he had never been invited to meetings at the university or advised of issues that could impact on residents and queried whether any of the Ward Members had been considered as the representative on the board.

The make up of the board had been decided by the Government of the day but the City Council need to find a way to gain a place on the board. What is the application process?

The Director of Economic Development stated that she was not sure how to apply when a vacancy arose.

- Task and Finish Groups
 - The Talkin Tarn Task and Finish Group had met for the second time on 6 February 2013. The main focus of the meeting was to gain an understanding of the budget for the Tarn and the central charges which were associated to it. The Task Group were currently arranging a witness session to be held at the Tarn on 11 March 2013 to gain the views of interested parties.
- Scrutiny Annual Report – all Scrutiny Members had been e-mailed requesting any particular issues they wished to see discussed in the Scrutiny Annual Report. Members were invited to advise the Overview and Scrutiny Officer of any issues at the end of the meeting or by e-mail shortly thereafter. A draft of the Scrutiny Annual Report would be brought to the Panel's final meeting of the civic year on 11 April 2013.
- Work Programme – The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the current work programme and advised that the Local Plan update would be considered by the Panel at their meeting on 11 April 2013.

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 the Director of Economic Development and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer arrange a visit to the temporary premises of the Tourist Information Centre by the Tourist Information Task and Finish Group

EEOSP.16/13 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman advised that the order of the agenda had been amended to better facilitate Member and Officer time.

EEOSP.17/13 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Policy and Performance Officer presented report PC.07/13 that updated the Panel on the latest position regarding the Service Standards which help measure the City Council's performance and customer satisfaction.

The Officer explained that earlier in the year a list of Service Standards had been developed that Officers believed affected the Council's customers most, and standards by which the Council could be held to account. The standards were based on timeliness, accuracy and appropriateness of the service provided in key areas.

Service standards were set against local targets as Officers believed they were of more relevance. Performance was measured on a monthly basis and the standards displayed in the Civic Centre reception area and on the Council's website. The performance was also reviewed monthly by the Senior Management Team.

As well as the list of Service Standards several other measures existed that were monitored by the team(s) directly delivering the service, or through the corporate performance management process. It was intended that every team would have some measures in place that would help them continually improve the service provided. That would include value for money and customer satisfaction.

The Officer explained that with regard to missed waste or recycling collections, there were 250,000 collections per month therefore that statistic was very good. A lot of hard work had been done regarding the processing of benefits claims and the work had progressed well.

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

Was the upward trend in the processing of planning applications a true reflection or had there been less applications submitted in the run-up to Christmas? Would performance dip during the restructuring of the Directorate?

The Director of Economic Development confirmed that there had been no reduction in the number of household applications submitted. She advised that, following the re-structuring of the Directorate, services to customers would be protected.

Were the waste collections that were cancelled due to the bad weather taken into account in the figures?

The Director of Local Environment explained that those collections were still accounted for but were not included as missed collections. Complaints about any cancelled collections would be dealt with as complaints rather than missed collections and the figures in January would reflect the cancelled collections, and report them as a separate figure.

What was the reason for the downward trend in household waste sent for recycling?

The Director of Local Environment explained that there was a reduction in the winter months due to there being less garden waste. She stated that that figure would be better compared with November 2011 and she agreed to advise Members of that figure for comparison.

Countries on the continent were more efficient at recycling. Had any research been done to determine how they were different and whether the City Council could learn anything from them?

The Director of Local Environment explained that she had looked at the issue in the past and that there were differences in how the data was put together. In the UK there was little support for incineration and more for mechanical biological treatment (MBT). Work was ongoing looking at standardising waste data to ensure all countries' data were comparable. The Director added that, with regard to recycling in Carlisle, Officers had a number of ideas for improvement but the Council were, at present, tied into a contract. There could be advantages to the recycling being co-mingled rather than separated at source, but the Director believed that by training the crews well, giving them support and monitoring performance the process would provide a high quality service.

There were problems with green boxes for houses of multiple occupancy as they were not big enough. Also the recycling crews often left the bins away from where they were collected and therefore they go missing. Was there a better way of collecting that waste?

The Director of Local Environment agreed with the point made and advised that the current contract would be in place until 2015. After that date a change in the method of collection could be made. The Director was currently working with the contractor to improve and replace the receptacles but if crews were not returning the green boxes people would be less inclined to take part in the scheme.

In response to a query the Director advised that there was no income from the sale of compost made from recycled garden waste.

Was there a better rate on co-mingled recycling?

The Director of Local Environment advised that the main issue was the capacity in the market for recycling and a dip in the demand for one part eg paper would have an effect. Therefore it was preferable to source waste separated at source. The main thing was to do what was best for Carlisle.

Would it be useful to send questionnaires to households before the current contract expired in 2015 to determine what householders wanted or their views on how the process could be improved?

Many people ignored questionnaires and put the paper straight into recycling. There was a judicial review at the European Courts considering the issue of whether co-mingled was separated waste or not.

Eighteen months ago the Director of Local Environment gave a presentation on waste collection. It would be useful to have another presentation prior to the expiry of the current contract.

The Director of Local Environment advised that there would be an annual update to the Panel in June 2013 and that would be a useful time to update the Members.

In response to a query the Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Executive were not, at the present time, considering weekly refuse collection.

RESOLVED: That Report PC.07/13 – Performance Update report be noted.

EEOSP.18/13 DRAFT CARLISLE PLAN 2013-2016

The Leader submitted report PC.04/13 presenting the draft Carlisle Plan 2013 – 2016. He informed Members that the Plan replaced the previous Corporate Plan 2010 - 2013 and formed part of the Council's Policy Framework.

The Plan set out the Council's vision for Carlisle and the six priorities for action over the medium term (2013 - 2016), with the text under each priority providing the background and further detail on how the priority would be achieved.

The draft Action Plan for delivering the priorities was set out at Appendix 2, including medium term actions aimed to be delivered over the life of the Plan and actions to be

delivered within the financial year. That aligned the Plan with the budget year. Future actions which developed could fit into the budget planning process.

The Executive had on 11 February 2013 (EX.10/13) considered the report and decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Had considered the presentation and content of the draft Carlisle Plan with a view to seeking continuous improvement in the way the Council delivered services to its local communities.
2. Referred the draft Carlisle Plan to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for consultation.
3. Referred the Action Plan to partners, including community and voluntary groups for consultation.”

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

There were no “Listening Council” events north or east of the river listed. Had the full list been published?

The Leader advised that while he would not be able to visit every community centre during the events he was available every Saturday morning in the central library and also held regular web discussions as well as discussions with the press and radio. Beyond that the Leader and members of the Executive were happy to meet with the local community. The Leader added that, as he lived in Brampton, he knew the area and people knew him; for that reason he had decided to hold a session in Longtown rather than Brampton.

How would the Leader ensure a way of showing how the needs of health and youth were being met?

As a result of a similar question from the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel the Leader had attended a Healthy City meeting in Penrith to find out the long term strategy of public health, the university and the NHS. The Leader was concerned that the Healthy City project was losing focus but was reassured after the meeting that it was not. With regard to young people the Leader acknowledged that there was a need for jobs and apprenticeships. However, he was aware that the Council had a duty of care that would be reflected throughout the process.

It would be useful to have an additional column that indicated the status of an action.

The Leader confirmed he would look at that issue and that some actions would be ongoing and some works in progress.

In response to a query the Leader advised that he had been speaking with a number of partners including Pirelli and Bendalls who were keen to champion apprenticeships and wanted to build relationships with local schools regarding apprenticeship opportunities. The Leader believed that the City needed apprenticeships in areas such as electric welding. Not all young people were able to attend university and apprenticeships may be more suitable for them.

The Economy and Environment Portfolio Holder advised that he was working with Carlisle College who were more than happy to work with employers regarding apprenticeship schemes. There was also the possibility of young people setting up their own business and becoming employers themselves. The Portfolio Holder was engaging with companies and training providers and would work with training providers such as Systems Training.

As 30% of the authority was outside the City boundaries there was not a lot in the Plan that was relevant to them.

In response to a query the Leader confirmed that the "Listening Council" events would not be minuted but that he would be taking notes to ensure issues were followed up.

The Leader had met with a group of 40 young farmers recently who felt strongly that they were part of the young people of Carlisle.

With regard to housing needs affordable housing was currently more prevalent but it was not necessarily affordable for some people. It may be better to have more social housing available.

There was concern about the potential impact of the Welfare Reform Act and the possibility that people may have to move house and children be moved to different schools.

The Leader acknowledged that that was a concern and that the changes would be hard for a lot of people.

With regard to affordable housing the Leader was working with social housing landlords on the matter. A visit from the Housing Minister had been arranged for March and it was the Leader's intention to meet with him and discuss those issues.

The Leader agreed that social housing was needed but believed that one of the advantages of building new houses was that it created employment for local people who then put money back into the local economy.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that a report on empty properties and the Disabled Facilities Grant would be considered by the Executive at their meeting on 11 March 2013.

A Member was concerned about the loss of traditional apprenticeships. He was also concerned about the number of people who could not afford the affordable housing and the number of people visiting the Salvation Army for food parcels. He believed that Members should work together to attempt to rectify the issues.

Was the improvement of the public realm, Botchergate and the City Centre included in the Plan?

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder advised that although highway issues were outwith the City Council's control Members were looking at signage and encouraging shop owners and bus operators to provide good facilities.

It was agreed that it would be useful to reinstate the Botchergate sub group.

The Director of Economic Development advised that Officers were looking at Rickergate and Botchergate and the links through the city. Officers were working with property owners regarding signage and derelict properties.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder confirmed that the tourism and marketing strategy was deliverable within current budgets but, following the transformation within the Economic Development Directorate, staff resources were stretched and therefore it was essential that the staff were looked after.

The Director of Economic Development believed that the marketing and branding of Carlisle was important to ensure that people outside the area knew what Carlisle was about and to raise the profile of Carlisle. The Portfolio Holder added that effective partnerships would be crucial in that respect.

The County Council had made a big effort of promoting Carlisle in London. Did the City Council have any similar plans for London and Brussels?

The Director of Economic Development commended the County Council on their work and stated that the relationship with the County Council was strong which could only be good for the City as well as Cumbria.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for the report and acknowledged the value of Overview and Scrutiny Panels working with the Executive to move issues forward and challenge ideas.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report PC.04/13 – Draft Carlisle Plan 2013/16 be noted.

(2) That the Botchergate Working Group be reinstated to monitor the area.

EEOSP.19/13 KINGMOOR NATURE RESERVE

The Director of Local Environment submitted Report LE.05/13 on the proposal to declare Kingmoor South Nature Reserve as a Local Nature Reserve pursuant to Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which gave local authorities, in consultation with Natural England, the power to designate Local Nature Reserves. Slides of the Nature Reserve were presented.

The Director of Local Environment provided Members with the location and history of the site. There were many different habitats present within the reserve with the main land use being pasture. There were also woodland blocks as well as still and flowing water, wildflower meadows, hedgerows and green tracks. Amongst the many species of wildlife found within the reserve were Great Crested and Smooth Newts, woodpeckers, nuthatches, tree creepers, squirrels, hedgehogs and foxes.

Kingmoor South had been managed as a nature reserve for many years and while there was open access throughout the site to the public the site was managed for both leisure use and nature conservation. A number of volunteer groups worked regularly within the reserve carrying out ecological work and there was also a “Volunteer Warden” who patrolled the site regularly helping to keep it tidy and well maintained and informing the Green Spaces team of any problems.

The Director of Local Environment advised that to date Natural England had been consulted on the proposal and a public notice was to be displayed in the information boards on site at Kingmoor Nature Reserve and a public notice published in the press.

There were a number of benefits to the declaration of a Local Nature Reserve and the declaration encompassed the values of the City Council's Corporate Plan by increasing people's pride and respect in their local area, and improving the quality of the local environment. The declaration also tied in with the Green Infrastructure Strategy contributing towards Carlisle being a "Big Green City" for all four of the core benefits. Local Nature Reserves also helped local authorities to meet Local Biodiversity Action Plan and sustainable development targets. In particular some species named in the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan were present at Kingmoor South Nature Reserve, including bats, Great Crested Newts and damselflies as well as one habitat, namely wet woodland.

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

Did the Landfill Cash Credit Scheme still exist and could that money be used in the Nature Reserve?

The Director of Local Environment confirmed that the scheme still existed and if the designation of the Nature Reserve went ahead Officers may be in a stronger position when applying to the scheme for funding.

Ten years ago the PTA of James Rennie School provided funding to repair the 2 bridges in the reserve but the paths on either side were still muddy.

The designation of the Nature Reserve would make it easier to obtain funding from the scheme although the pot of money was smaller. The Director agreed to discuss the issue with the Green Spaces Operations Manager.

There were a lot of residential properties along the lane to the reserve. It may be useful and enhance the consultation to include them in the consultation.

The Director of Local Environment agreed to put up a notice along the lane. In response to a query the Director advised that the statutory notice would provide information to the general public regarding the change of designation.

While there were a lot of advantages to the change were there any disadvantages anticipated?

The Director explained that the Nature Reserve would be managed in the same way as it was currently. The re-designation referred only to the land use.

The Director of Economic Development added that the development of a management plan was a requirement and that the re-designation was a formal designation which would be included in the Local Plan.

The Director of Local Environment advised that once classified, the Nature Reserve would be on a national list that could be accessed by visitors to the area.

Other parts of Carlisle also needed protection but it was agreed that it was important that the Executive supported the designation of the Nature Reserve.

Work was being undertaken with local schools regarding planting in the Nature Reserve.

RESOLVED: 1) That Members of the Panel supported the designation of the Nature Reserve and:

- Requested a public notice to be placed on the road East of the Nature Reserve
- That the opportunity to apply for the Landfill Tax Credit scheme funding for pathways and improvements in the nature Reserve be followed up
- To maximise the use of volunteers from a broader range of local organisations including local schools.

EEOSP.20/13 TRANSFORMATION

The Director of Economic Development submitted Report ED.08/13 that updated Members on the outcomes of the consultation to the Transformation proposals for the Economic Development Directorate and the implementation. The Director advised that as part of the Council's agreed savings target, the Economic Development Directorate were required to make savings of £150,000. The Director of Economic Development had worked closely with the Portfolio Holder to ensure that any re-structure would continue to address the issues around the administration's priority to support economic growth. Transformation proposals had also taken into account a number of key issues and influences that were taking place at a national and local level. In particular the changes to the planning system, the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the need to have an up to date Local Plan in order to deliver growth and address localism.

The Director of Economic Development explained that phase 1 of the consultation had been completed and the proposed structure had been revised in response to that consultation. The Director of Economic Development highlighted the issues raised. In response to those issues it was proposed that the Policy and Economic Regeneration teams should be merged. That would provide support for the Local Plan and ensure that the policies reflected the economic needs of the community. In addition, a new team would be established who would be responsible for Strategic Property. Development Management would remain a separate team and the Directorate would continue to review the processes through Lean Systems to help improve the customer service. The Director of Economic Development outlined the posts to be deleted and created and provided a detailed timetable for implementation.

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

In response to a query the Director of Economic Development confirmed that Impact Assessments had been considered and there would be no impact on any of the equality issues within the report.

The report stated that 10 posts would be deleted. Had consideration been given to redundancy and pension costs?

The Director confirmed that those issues had been taken into account and that vacant posts had been considered for those employees whose posts were at risk. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the redundancy budget was held centrally and the proposals had been analysed by the Director of Resources.

The Director confirmed that the timetable had been completed to the end of February and that Officers were now recruiting and appointing to posts.

The Director further confirmed that the savings were a response to the Medium Term Financial Plan and that any effect on the workload would be protected to ensure there would be no impact on direct services.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder advised that if the savings had been spread over 2 years there was the potential of recruiting to posts that would be deleted the following year. The Portfolio Holder explained that when looking at the workload Officers had considered where there was duplication in work. He acknowledged that the Director had to make savings but that service delivery, economic growth and the support given to staff would be monitored.

The Director stated that workloads would be monitored on a weekly basis and if there was a peak in workload the situation would be addressed. While the team did not like the changes being proposed they understood that savings had to be made.

Would there be any impact on the processing of household planning applications?

The Director confirmed that the work would not be affected and mechanisms were in place to support staff. A Lean Systems review had been undertaken regarding enforcement and while the Government were keen that targets should be adhered to processes would be reviewed to ensure there was no change to service delivery.

There was a concern that if there was an increase in household applications casual staff may be employed. Would it not be better just to employ people rather than bringing in people with specialist knowledge?

The Director reminded Members that the workloads would be monitored on a weekly basis and additional staff brought in if required. She confirmed that specialist companies were brought in to deal with particular applications rather than individual consultants.

Due to Government demands the Council could be in a position whereby it would not be able to ensure the quality of the work. The Executive and Overview and Scrutiny needed to know when that was likely to happen so the issues could be dealt with.

The Director confirmed that all feedback had been responded to and that some of those responses had been dealt with through the restructure. She confirmed that employees' views had been considered.

It was disappointing that the student placement post had been deleted. It would have been preferable to have been put on hold rather than deleted.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder stated that he had wanted to retain that post but it was not possible at the present time. However, Members and Officers would monitor the situation and the post reinstated at the earliest opportunity.

The Executive had the backing of Overview and Scrutiny Panels to review the situation in the next budget period.

In response to a query about reduced workload and additional work the Director confirmed that all options, including extra hours, would be considered.

The Director confirmed that Marketing and tourism had not been included in the restructure at the present time.

The Director explained that the report from Montagu Evans on the Council's property assets had led to the creation of the Asset Management Plan. The Strategic Property Manager would be responsible for managing the assets to maximise the benefits to the Council.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report ED.08/13 – Economic Development Directorate - Transformation Savings – be noted.

(2) That consideration is given to reinstating the Student Placement post at a future date if possible.

(The meeting ended at 12.25pm)