

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 23 JUNE 2011 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Rutherford (Chairman), Councillors Bowditch, Craig, Mrs Farmer (until 11:15), Hendry (substitute for Councillor McDevitt), Nedved (substitute for Councillor Mrs Robson) and Mrs Vasey

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Bloxham – Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Bowman – Economic Development Portfolio Holder

EEOSP.33/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors McDevitt, Mrs Robson and Watson.

EEOSP.34/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

EEOSP.35/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

EEOSP.27/11 – CONNECT2 CYCLEWAY

A Member asked for confirmation that the letter to the Big Lottery in respect of funding from Sustrans in connection with the Connect 2 Cycleway. The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) advised that a letter had been sent to the Big Lottery and Sustrans advising them that the City Council were to undertake an internal review into the matter and would contact them again with further comments. The Member stated that Officers should progress the matter as quickly as possible.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder voiced his disappointment in the way the matter had developed. He explained that the letter to the Big Lottery requested information on the criteria for them to withdraw funding. The Portfolio Holder further advised that without the funding the building of the bridge at Currock, owned by Cumbria County Council and the Railway Board, was on hold but that the City Council was committed to completing all other aspects of the project although completion would be later than originally planned.

The Strategic Director (Mr Crossley) believed that the letter to the Big Lottery may encourage the Lottery Commission to look at potential weaknesses in their system as there did not seem to be any monitoring on how money was spent once allocated. A Member stated that a charity with which she was connected had obtained money through the Lottery Commission and had to report regularly on how the money was

being spent and explain any changes to the original plans for how the money would be utilised.

Ms Culleton explained that there was a modification process and an appeals process on the Big Lottery website but nothing on Sustrans' website. The review by internal audit would be looking at all the relevant issues in relation to the withdrawal of funding by Sustrans.

EEOSP.24/11 – NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

In response to a query from a Member the Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) confirmed that staff workshops had been held at the end of May and early June to enable staff to have input into changes to service delivery. She confirmed that the proposals and consultation would take place in the near future.

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meetings held on 24 February 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2011 be noted.

EEOSP.36/11 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

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

EEOSP.37/11 OVERVIEW REPORT INCORPORATING THE WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.11/11 providing an overview of matters related to the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work. Details of the latest version of the work programme were also included.

Mrs Edwards reported that:

- The Forward Plan of the Executive covering the period 1 June 2011 to 30 September 2011 was published on 18 May 2011. The issues that fell within the remit of the Panel were:
 - KD.013/11 – Core Strategy – Issues and Options Paper – would be available for consideration by the Panel at their meeting on 28 July 2011
 - KD.015/11 – Parking Connect – as further information is awaited from Cumbria County Council the matter would now be considered by the Executive at their meeting in September 2011. Therefore the item would be available for consideration by the Panel at their meeting on 8 September 2011
 - KD.018/11 – Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership Enhanced Working Project – conclusions of Stage 1 – the item would be considered by the Executive at their meeting on 25 July 2011 which was prior to the Panel meeting on

28 July 2011. Mrs Edwards agreed to confirm whether it would be available for consideration by the Panel.

- KD.020/11 – Sustainable Energy – the item would be considered by the Executive at their meeting on 25 July 2011 which was prior to the Panel meeting on 28 July 2011. Mrs Edwards agreed to confirm whether it would be available for consideration by the Panel.

Members agreed that the Strategic Waste Partnership was an important issue that needed to be considered by the Panel as there could be some important decisions for the Council to be made. The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder explained some of the issues for discussion with regard to the partnership and the process leading to a final decision and implementation of the partnership. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that it was important that all Overview and Scrutiny Panels across the county considered the issues before a final decision was made.

A Member advised that there were a number of stages that the project would need to go through before full implementation. Members agreed that they wished to consider the item, along with Sustainable Energy and the Core Strategy Issues and Options at their meeting on 28 July.

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.

EEOSP.38/11 NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

The decision of the Executive on 18 April 2011, Minute Excerpt EX.059/11, had been circulated. The Minute Excerpt was the Executive's response to the recommendations made by the Neighbourhood Working Task and Finish Group in its report OS.08.11 which had previously been agreed by this Panel.

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) outlined some of the work that had been undertaken in response to the recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Ms Culleton and the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) had held joint meetings with Riverside and matters were progressing.

Recommendation 2 – a team of supervisors were able to make decisions on small spends and operations and they were monitored by senior Officers.

- *Who decided the budget levels delegated to officers?*

Ms Culleton explained that in respect of joint budgets with external partners the intention would be that there would be a pot of money with authority for spending. However, that issue was still under discussion.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that budgets were agreed by Council and it was at the discretion of the Assistant Directors and Directors how their budgets were spent with the Executive and Portfolio Holders being updated when necessary.

Recommendation 3 – the authority had project managers, project initiation documents and a programme monitoring group. With regard to multi agency groups the roles and responsibilities would be defined.

Recommendation 4 – Community based websites would be updated.

Recommendation 5 – Carlisle Focus was used, and would continue to be used, to advertise activities held within communities.

- *Were Officers aware of any impact of publishing the Carlisle Focus twice yearly rather than four times per year?*

The Policy and Communications Manager (Mr O’Keeffe) explained that there would be some difficulties especially around publicising community events and officers were attempting to quantify the issues and look at similar issues county-wide. Results were expected shortly.

- *There were a lot of good news stories that the people of Carlisle did not hear about. As there was usually a cost related to advertising was there any way Officers could work with the press through the Communications unit within the Council?*

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder advised that the Communications unit arranged press briefings and there had been some success. He agreed that Officers needed to look at ways of involving the press more often.

Recommendation 7 – monitoring of complaints and compliments was a key area for area working and funding had been agreed to develop a management information system that would identify frequently recurring issues and problem areas. That was expected to take 12-18 months to implement.

Recommendation 8 – The Customer Contact Centre now included staff from the Police and Citizens Advice Bureau.

Recommendation 9 – Community Engagement would take up the issues raised.

Recommendation 10 – Officers from Community Engagement and Green Spaces had been involved in the pilot scheme in Harraby. That project had become self sustaining and would be reviewed in the Autumn. The lessons learned would be used as examples of best practice in the wider area.

Recommendation 11 – the results of a pilot in the West of the County would be used to shape the way forward. Partners would concentrate on prevention and changes in behaviour and would be action orientated.

In response to a Member's query Ms Culleton explained that the pilot had been running for approximately 6 months and had indicated a powerful way of working. It indicated that problems were not always the responsibility of the City Council and highlighted which partners were responsible for resolving issues. Ms Culleton added that she would check when a review of the pilot was to be undertaken and report back to Members.

With regard to Neighbourhood Forums the Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that Neighbourhood Forums in the previous format would no longer be held but that it had been suggested that forums would be held 2-3 times per year and would be called by District Councils or the County Council for a particular area and would be issue based. With respect to grants monies people could apply for grants and it would be at the discretion of Councillors within the Ward or Zone to determine grants based on the information provided in a business case. The forums would focus on value for money and help people more efficiently. However the matter was still to be decided.

Recommendation 13 - Ms Culleton and Mr Gerrard had held a strategic joint meeting with Riverside focussing on places, people and property. Officers were liaising with Riverside in respect of Officers from Riverside having authority to issue fixed penalty notices. Ms Culleton was awaiting a final decision from Riverside.

Recommendation 17 – a system had been developed whereby requests, complaints and compliments from Members, Officers, stakeholders and the public would be input. That would prevent duplication and be more efficient. Members would use that system rather than ringing officers directly. The process would be included in the Customer Access Strategy and would give an insight into how people were treated and issues logged and would give an indication of patterns and trends and lead to a more efficient way of using resources.

Recommendation 18 – Officers were working with the CDRP and would be picked up in the review. Some resources could be diverted into educating people about fly tipping and environmental crime.

RESOLVED – 1) That progress on the recommendations would be reported to the Panel on a six monthly basis with urgent issues being brought to Members when necessary.

EEOSP.39/11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Policy and Communications Manager (Mr O'Keeffe) submitted report PPP.09/11 which provided the Panel with end of year performance for 2010/11.

Mr O'Keeffe explained that the report outlined the review, development and the summary changes to the Corporate Plan and added that Assistant Directors would give a more detailed analysis and update of progress at a future meeting.

A summary of the changes to the 2011/12 Plan were provided in the table in the report and included one new Local Environment action, one new Economy action

and changes to others and a revised performance framework section to reflect the development of actions, risk and performance indicators to measure the performance of the key actions.

The report also highlighted the changes that had taken place throughout the year and gave an update on the Transformation Programme. The report concluded with some good news stories and achievements.

Mr O’Keeffe explained that the next report to the Panel would be the 1st quarter report and it would be different to the report presented. It would contain key actions applicable to this Panel and any relevant sub actions, performance and risks that were related to the key actions. Some of the performance measures looked different than in previous reports as most of the National Indicators had been removed. The Council was also moving away from figure based performance reports and were developing measures that related to the key action.

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

- *What was the current situation with regard to the Old Town Hall?*

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that a bid for funding had not been successful although some funding had been secured from English Heritage. However, although various funding had been secured, the situation was currently on hold.

- *It would be useful to know why the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund had not been successful in order to learn for the future. Would it be possible to see the bid document? What would be done in future to ensure bids were more successful?*

The Strategic Director (Mr Crossley) explained that the Heritage Lottery Fund had advised that that was due to competition and the lack of money available. The bid had met the criteria but was not considered to be a priority by the heritage Lottery fund.

- *Museums lobbied at the highest level when applying for grants. The Director of the British Museum was due to visit Carlisle the following week. Would it be useful to seek his advice on how best to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund?*
- *Was there scope in the City Centre Partnership to bid for the Old Town Hall?*

Mr Crossley believed that it could and that it was an issue for debate with private sector partners as it was seen as part of the development of the City Centre. There were also a number of questions that needed to be resolved in respect of the Tourist Information Centre.

- *What was the current position in respect of Parking Connect?*

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that he was waiting for further information from the County Council.

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) explained that she had attended a meeting the previous day and updated members on the discussions.

There was some discussion around visitor parking permits and the current contract with the County Council in respect of the administration of parking enforcement. The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder confirmed that the current contract with the County Council was set up in 1997.

- *The residents parking scheme was set up at the behest of residents near the City Centre who were having problems parking outside their homes. Any changes to the scheme received unfavourable press. There had been requests to extend the residents parking scheme.*

Ms Culleton stated that there had been discussion relating to the administration and enforcement of residents parking.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder stated that he had attended a meeting of the County Highway and Transport Group and updated Members on the discussions held.

Mr O'Keeffe explained that the performance document was an overview of the current position and that the first ¼ quarterly report would return to the normal format with more measures and less narrative.

RESOLVED: 1) That Report PPP.09/11 be noted and the Panel looked forward to the new 1st quarter monitoring report in September.

EEOSP.40/11 DEVELOPMENT OF CARLISLE'S VISITOR ECONOMY – PROJECT INITIATION AND UPDATE

The Strategic Director (Mr Crossley) presented report SD.04/11 that provided the Panel with an update on the proposals to bring together the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and the City Centre Partnership to form a new “not for profit” company limited by guarantee. The proposals had been agreed by the Executive, the Tourism Partnership and the City Centre Partnership and had been set out in a Project Initiation Document.

A key part of the project was to develop a Business Improvement District (BID) designed to cover a specific city centre area, where additional business rates would be levied to provide investment funding for new activities that would increase visitor numbers and trade. The proposals had also sought to deal with the withdrawal of County and regional public funding from the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and the proposals sought to draw together both of the existing partnerships – the Carlisle Tourism Partnership and the City Centre Partnership – and devise one managing arrangement that would be more cohesive and efficient.

Mr Crossley outlined the progress made since the Executive agreed the new way forward. He advised that progress had been slower than originally forecast due to

the additional work generated by the Radio 1 Big weekend and restructure arrangements within the Economic Development Team.

Mr Crossley concluded by explaining that the next key actions for the project would be the successful set up of the Project Board and the recruitment to the post of Tourism and City Centre Director.

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

- *One area for concern was the slippage in timescales.*

The Strategic Director (Mr Crossley) stated that some of the slippage was due to a reduction in resources within the Directorate. He believed that the project was approximately 6-7 weeks behind schedule and that in partnership terms it was important to appoint a Tourism and City Centre Director and hold the first meeting of the shadow board as soon as possible.

Mr Crossley explained that external support had been identified but that job descriptions were still to be produced. There were a number of people who may be interested in forming a shadow board. He believed it was important to have a meeting as soon as possible and to progress on issues such as an events programme.

- *Was that the right way round to do things? Should the board not be set up first?*

Mr Crossley stated that interested parties had been identified from the constituent groups and they had been asked what kind of community investment company should be set up and what they would want.

- *Who would the company be accountable to?*

Mr Crossley advised that the company would be accountable to the City and County Council and therefore scrutiny would be involved. The City Council would invest resources and services such as city centre cleanliness. When the company was being set up some of those responsibilities could be relinquished to the company. There had been difficulties trying to get larger businesses to engage in the process and Officers had worked hard to explain the purpose of the project.

- *What would be the membership of the Board? Would City Councillors be included and would there be politically proportional representation?*

Mr Crossley advised that that discussion had not taken place but that consideration would be given to ensuring the right balance.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that there had been a lot of meetings but that the project needed to move forward. She advised that more information would be provided as the project progressed.

- *How accurate were the timescales?*

Mr Crossley stated that the consultation had used advice from similar projects outside Carlisle but that Officers had been specific in what was intended from the project for Carlisle. He confirmed that he would report back to the Panel at the meeting on 8 September 2011 and again on 1 December 2011.

- *There were representatives from a variety of retailers, large and small, and it was important that they were all included.*

Mr Crossley confirmed that there was a dual balance between retailers within the City Centre and the district in respect of tourism. There was also the issue of night time and the cultural economy.

- *The last project that the consultant was involved with may have been with a much larger city than Carlisle that would allow the City Centre to be split into separate BID areas. Carlisle had a very compact City Centre and Members felt that it was more appropriate, for example, that Botchergate be included in that BID rather than be the focus for a separate one at a later stage.*

Mr Crossley advised that the consultant's report contained a number of models some of which were larger than others.

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) (Ms Meek) advised that there were different ways of classing a city centre and the definition was contained within the Local Development Framework in respect of planning considerations.

- *The project was not a complicated one. Why was an external consultant used?*

Mr Crossley explained that the consultant was employed to advise what steps to go through to form a company and to apply those conditions to the City Council. The consultant had also undertaken some market testing. The consultant had brought experience from other areas and advice on how other areas had developed similar companies. His advice was technical rather than conceptual.

- *The report mentioned a City Marketing Group. Would it be possible to see the outcome of the consultation of that group?*

Mr Crossley advised that the first meeting of the board would look at all possibilities. He and Ms Meek had spoken to retailers and had come to the conclusion that Carlisle did not sell itself. He hoped that the project would enable people to work together to market Carlisle more successfully and "sell" the City with realism and integrity. He added that the Discover Carlisle website was a great service for marketing Carlisle.

Mr Crossley further advised that the next step would be to look at costings. He added that the group consisted of the City Council, CN Group, Investors in Cumbria and representatives from the private sector.

Mr Crossley believed that the completion of the CNDR would be a good starting point for the project.

Ms Meek advised that the project was about a public/private sector partnership and the first meeting would highlight that the City Council was not wholly responsible for promoting Carlisle.

Members agreed that the project was an important and necessary development for the success of Carlisle and that they were aware that money was in short supply and Officers needed to be forward looking. Members were also aware that it was important that both large and small investors were involved in the project.

RESOLVED – 1) In order that the Panel could monitor progress and timescales update reports would be presented at the Panel meetings on 8 September 2011 and 1 December 2011.

2) That consideration be given by the Executive to cross party representation when the board was set up.

[The meeting ended at 11:55am]