

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2011 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Bradley (Vice Chairman) Councillors Cape, Mrs Farmer, Glover, Mrs Parsons, Nedved and Mrs Riddle

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Geddes – Community Engagement Portfolio Holder
Mr Barker, Secretary of the Carlisle and Rural Tenants' Federation
Councillor Earp – Observer for part of the meeting.

COSP.26/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Clarke and the Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Bainbridge.

COSP.27/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

COSP.28/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman and that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2011 be noted.

COSP.29/11 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

COSP.30/11 QUESTIONS BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed Mr Barker, Secretary of the Carlisle and Rural Tenants' Federation to the meeting.

Riverside Carlisle

Pursuant to Procedure Rule 10.1, the Assistant Director (Governance) to report the receipt of the following questions to the Chairman which have been submitted on notice by Mr Barker, Secretary of the Carlisle and Rural Tenants' Federation.

- 1) "Bearing in mind the Coalition Government's continued and increasing emphasis on open-ness and accountability by public bodies, and bearing in mind the recent instructions to local authorities and other public bodies by the Secretary of State for Local Government to impose that increased open-ness and accountability, do you consider that the Riverside Panel report last summer in any way represented an adequate response to those Secretary of State's instructions, in view of the fact that the Riverside report was criticised by members of this Panel as inadequate in clarity or verbal explanation and also criticised as incomprehensible by the national media which pointed out that the report had more than forty unexplained abbreviations and unexplained pieces of jargon?"
- 2) "Bearing in mind the criticism by members of this Panel, and the serious criticism by the national media outlined in my previous question, and bearing in mind the overwhelming difficulties that members of Carlisle and Rural Tenants' Federation and the public of Carlisle have had in getting a public dialogue with Riverside about the Audit Commission report, do you consider that the report by Riverside to the Panel last summer in any way helped the Panel, or in any way helped the Carlisle tenants of Riverside, or in any way helped the taxpayers of Carlisle who have a democratic right to be kept informed about Riverside's involvement in the affairs of the city council estates and in the affairs of the 6000 Riverside tenants and the other people who live on these estates?"
- 3) "Bearing in mind the criticism of the Riverside Panel report last summer, outlined above, and bearing in mind the fact that the current report before the Panel today contains no unexplained abbreviations and no unexplained pieces of jargon and is in fact written in comprehensible English, what lessons should Riverside draw from the criticism at the previous Panel hearing and from the criticism by the national media and what lessons should the Panel draw from the fact that a Riverside report is now written in comprehensible English?"

The Chairman answered Mr Barker's questions as follows:

"1) Your first question relates to the Panel's view on the report which was presented by Riverside at the meeting of the Panel on 10 June 2010 which you attended. You may recall that when this report was considered that Members asked Riverside not to use acronyms and jargon in future reports. I believe that you have misinterpreted this simple request as your question states that the report 'criticised by Members of this Panel as inadequate.'

2) I can answer this question on behalf of the Panel. The report which was provided in June 2010 along with the representation of senior officers from Riverside was very much welcomed by Members of the Panel. Following consideration of that report the Panel decided that they wish to invite Riverside to the Panel to monitor the partnership on a six monthly basis. It is my view that holding Riverside to account on a regular basis will assist in ensuring a good service is provided to Riverside tenants and give value for money for the taxpayers of Carlisle.

3) Again, I must point out to you that the Panel did not openly criticise the report, Members purely asked Riverside not to include acronyms and jargon in future reports. As you have pointed out, the report which was considered on 13 January 2011 was particularly easy to read and understand and I am pleased that Riverside colleagues have listened to, and acted on, the requests from Members of the Panel.”

The Chairman gave Mr Barker the opportunity to ask a supplementary question and Mr Barker responded that he had no further questions for the Panel at this time.

COSP.31/11 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.09/11 which provided an overview of matters relating to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work and included the latest version of the work programme and Forward Plan items which related to the Panel.

Mrs Edwards reported that the Forward Plan of Executive key decisions, covering the period 1 March 2011 to 30 June 2011 had been published on 15 February 2011 and the Plan for the period 1 April to 31 July 2011 had been published on 18 March 2011 and there were no issues in either Plan that fell within the remit of the Panel.

Mrs Edwards reminded the Panel that Councillors Mrs Clarke and Mrs Riddle had met with the Health Improvement Officer on 8 December 2010 regarding the 50+ work. She explained that the 50+ project had received additional funding from the Sport and Physical Activity Alliance (SPAA) and had engaged 19 volunteers. The City element had 131 people signed up on the database and the oldest attendee was 88. Mrs Edwards outlined the cost and some of the activities which were carried out.

Mrs Edwards explained that the rural element of the project began on 25 January and 50+ was developing and linking into housing with activities and an open day planned at Freshfield Court, Botcherby. An allotment project was also being developed using a collaborative approach with a variety of partners.

Members discussed the 50+ work and agreed that the work should continue into the next municipal year and should cover a broader area with regard to older people. The services provided by both the City and County Councils impacted on a number of areas and both should be able to demonstrate that there was more support available other than social care. The County Council were looking at the Ageing Well Programme and there should be some discussions with them on where the work of this Panel would sit within that work. Members agreed that a holistic approach should be taken regarding the work.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive agreed to support the Panel in bringing together the City and County Councils to discuss the older people work.

Mrs Edwards informed the Panel that the Chairman of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Chairman of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been scheduled to meet with the Economic Development Portfolio Holder on 9 March 2011 to discuss the work of the Shop Doctor, the meeting had been postponed and had been re-arranged to be held on 6 April 2011.

She also informed the Panel that the joint meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Group and the Executive had been rescheduled to take place on 5 April 2011. The protocol on the relationship between Overview and Scrutiny and Executive had been redrafted in discussion with the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen and would be considered at the joint meeting.

A Member commented that the revised Policy and Budget Framework had resulted in more decisions being made by the Executive without being scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. He felt that Scrutiny was not able to see the key issues which Executive would be considering in the future and felt that the information flow between Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive had not been productive.

Mrs Edwards explained that the draft protocol suggested improvements on how items were considered by Executive and Scrutiny and how communications between the two could be improved.

A Member asked for clarification with regard to the delay in the Women and Families Accommodation project. The Panel felt that the project should move forward with some urgency as it affected vulnerable people within the City.

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) explained that the speed of the project had slowed down to allow for the outcome of the review of Homelessness and Hostel Services which was due by 31 March 2011 but the work had not stopped. Mr Gerrard reassured the Panel that the project was moving forward and he would report back to keep the Panel informed of the outcome of the review. In response to a question Mr Gerrard explained that he was not aware of any price increase to the contract in the new financial year and he would confirm this.

A Member felt that the Panel should be considering how the Council engaged with the third sector. The third sector worked within tight financial margins and was dealing with the loss of financial support. He felt that the value of the third sector outweighed the money spent on them. He added that there were real concerns with regard to the future of the third sector and felt that it would be a good issue for the Panel.

The Community Engagement Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that the Council had already started to communicate with the third sector and she agreed that there was a role for Overview and Scrutiny to look at social return on investments within the community.

Minutes of the Scrutiny Chairs Group held on 1 March 2011 had been circulated to Members.

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 minutes from the Scrutiny Chairs Group held on 1 March 2011 be noted.

3) That the following matters be considered at the Panel's Development Session to be held at the beginning of the new municipal year:

- 50+ work
- Involvement of the third sector
- Employment for young people and NEETs
- Social return on investment

COSP.32/11 DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented the Draft Scrutiny Annual Report (report OS.07/11).

Mrs Edwards explained that the Report aimed to summarise the work carried out in the Civic year and to discuss issues for the future. Comments made by the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels will be used to amend the draft before it is considered by the Scrutiny Chairs Group. Following the Chairs Group the report will then be submitted to Council for consideration.

Mrs Edwards outlined the layout of the report and drew Members attention to part 2 of the report which gave a summary of the progress made with regard to the recommendations which arose from the review of the scrutiny process. Mrs Edwards asked the Panel for their opinion on the implementation of the recommendations and asked them to give their comments for insertion into the 2010/11 update.

The Panel discussed the recommendations that had been made in the 2009 review of scrutiny and the progress made on each one. The Panel agreed an update for each of the thirteen recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – The Panel agreed that there needed to be some improvement to the way items were scheduled for Overview and Scrutiny. The Panel wanted earlier notice of items that the Executive would be considering in the future.

Recommendation 2 – The selection of Chairs had been successful and should continue as set out in the recommendation

Recommendation 3 – The Panel names had been changed

Recommendation 4 – Briefing meetings began at 9.15am and had proved to be successful. Members commented that they would like to see some changes to the way reports were prepared and presented at meetings. The Panel felt that reports should be prepared and presented by Portfolio Holders supported by the relevant officers, especially for contentious or political matters.

Mrs Edwards confirmed that this issue would also be considered as part of the protocol for the relationship between Scrutiny and Executive.

Recommendation 5 – Members felt that there had been some improvement with regard to resolutions and responses but wanted more reasons from the Executive for accepting or rejecting references from Scrutiny.

Recommendation 6 – It was proposed that the meetings would be formalised as part of the protocol with quarterly diarised meetings.

Recommendation 7 – Task and Finish Groups were working well for the Panel.

Recommendation 8 – In consideration of the 2011/12 – 2015/16 budget there had been little input from this Panel due to the nature of the budget.

Recommendation 9 – Members felt that there was a risk that the Council could become ‘inward looking’ if it did not take the opportunity to involve more public and other representatives in the Panel’s work. Members felt that the opportunity was limited with Task and Finish Groups as each Panel had only carried out one piece of Task and Finish Group work in 2010/11. Members agreed that there should be some further exploration of the possibility of co-opting other Members or representatives from outside organisations onto the Panel for specific issues.

Recommendation 10 - The use of Lead Members had been more successful when Lead Members were appointed to a time limited specific piece of work that the Member had experience, knowledge or an interest in and agreed that this should continue.

Recommendation 11 – The Development Sessions worked well and should be continued. Portfolio Holders and Senior Officers should be invited to attend the Sessions.

Recommendation 12 – The Informal sessions had proved useful and should continue in the same format.

Recommendation 13 - The training for new Members had been formalised by the Member Learning Development Group. It was identified that Chairs Training was required in 2011/12.

RESOLVED – That the comments and resolutions as set out above be incorporated into the Annual Scrutiny Report in conjunction with recommendations made by the Resources and Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

COSP.33/11 NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) submitted report OS.08/11 which included the draft report of the Neighbourhood Services Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Mrs Bradley, Lead Member on the Neighbourhood Working Task and Finish Group, presented the report and reminded the Panel that the Task and Finish Group was a joint Group between the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and

the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Group had produced the draft report which set out a number of recommendations for action for the Executive.

Councillor Mrs Bradley took the Panel through the background and methodology of the Task and Finish Group and highlighted an update on Cumbria County Council's Task group on Locality Working.

Councillor Mrs Bradley thanked all the Members, officers and outside organisations and agencies who had taken part in the Task and Finish Group and thanked Members who had completed the enquiry form. She stated that the workshop for partners had been extremely useful for the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Mrs Bradley informed the Panel that the County Council had also undertaken a review of Neighbourhood Working focussing on localities. The City Council Task and Finish Group invited a representative from the County Council to give a presentation to the Task and Finish Group on their work. The Task and Finish Group had suggested that it would be useful for the City and County Council to meet to discuss the outcomes but unfortunately this had not happened.

Councillor Mrs Bradley drew Members attention to the recommendations in the report and asked for their comments.

With regard to recommendation 4, a Member commented that some consideration had to be given to members of the community who did not have access to computers and so would not be able to access the community websites.

Mrs Edwards informed the Panel that recommendation 5 regarding the Carlisle Focus magazine had been added as the Group had understood that not everyone would have access to the internet.

A Member asked if the recommendations could include a way to improve the use of the Customer Contact Centre as a central information point for the community.

In response to a question Councillor Mrs Bradley clarified the reason for recommendation 6 and added that it was extremely important for Elected Members and members of the Community to know who to contact within the Council for various issues.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive agreed that it was important to have up to date contact information available. She informed the Panel that discussion had taken place with the Communications section to prepare an A-Z directory of staff and services. The directory would include a brief description of each directorate and the services it provided. She agreed that a staff structure could be included in the directory.

Members discussed the possibility of giving Community Centres and Parish Clerks access to the GRANTfinder database or a similar system if the terms of the subscription allowed it. A Member commented that Community Centres and Parish

Councils had access to a Fund Finder package through the Cumbria Voluntary Service if they were a member.

A Member thanked Councillor Mrs Bradley for her work on such a tremendous piece of work and asked that the Panel monitor the outcome of the recommendations and the feedback from the Executive.

RESOLVED – 1) That the recommendations as set out in the Neighbourhood Working report be agreed;

2) That the Neighbourhood Working report be considered by the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel and with their agreement the report then be referred to the Executive for a formal response to the recommendations.

COSP.34/11 ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTING TO SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEETs)

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) submitted report CD.03.11 which described activities, joint working arrangements and proposed new ways of working to improve wellbeing and address worklessness in young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).

The Play Development Manager (Ms Huntington) explained that the report highlighted how the Community Engagement Directorate supported young people not in education, employment or training and how, through the work, the Directorate contributed to the employment priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.

She explained that part one of the report focussed on current programmes and activities and part two contained a proposal for a more coherent joined up approach which made better use of resources, new structures and ways of working.

Ms Huntington reported that the Community Housing and Health Service was contracted to provide services to young people through Cumbria Youth Support Service Contracts (CYSS) which was funded by the County Council and managed by the lead contractor Connexions. Ms Huntington outlined the range of services delivered and added that CYSS had awarded a grant of £26,000 for this year. The grant, however, would be reviewed in 60 days and this could result in a reduction to the grant.

Mr Gerrard added that the second part of the report showed that services to support young people would continue and there was funding in place, even if the CYSS grant was reduced, to deliver a good quality programme of activity.

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

- *Members thanked officers for the detailed report.*

- *Was there any capacity to capture the outcomes from some of the programmes to help shape the programmes for the future?*

Ms Huntington confirmed that there ways in ways data could be captured but any information would have to be collated carefully as there were strict guidelines on the information that could be gathered from young people.

A Member suggested that young people who attended the events could complete a short form and they would not have to supply personal details such as their names and addresses. Any information could be used as a preventative method so the Council could understand why and how young people become NEETs and target their work appropriately.

The Community Engagement Portfolio commented that the prevention part of the work was an area of the work she would like to see expanded and hoped that working with the Youth Zone would help achieve this.

- *Who co-ordinated the work overall in Carlisle?*

Ms Huntington responded that the work was carried out amongst partners but felt there was some scope for the City Council to take the lead on the work in the future. She added that it would be prudent for the Council to work with Connexions initially as they already worked with NEETs and held the necessary data.

Mr Gerrard added that the Carlisle Youth Group Forum would have a role in co-ordinating the work and the Youth Zone was an active member of the forum.

- *How where the areas for the summer schemes decided?*

Ms Huntington explained that in previous year the summer schemes had been funded by the Lottery bid and so the play team try to cover as many areas as possible. The Lottery funding finished in July and so this year's scheme would run differently. The areas would be selected using statistics from last year's schemes and any recommendations made by Ward Councillors of areas with a particular need would also be welcomed. The Play Team also worked with the Prevent and Deter team to target areas of specific need.

- *A copy of the young person's magazine 'abstract' had been circulated to all Members. Members were impressed by the magazine and asked for more information on the project.*

Ms Huntington responded that the magazine had been prepared by young people for young people and focussed on youth homelessness and school related topics, targeting specific NEET groups. The project had been funded by CYSS and another magazine had gone to press. The magazine was distributed through schools, libraries and the young people who created the magazine.

- *The new Carlisle Youth Zone would open in April, at what stage would an impact assessment of the provision within Carlisle be carried out?*

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive understood there was some concern that the Youth Zone would affect the youth provision within the City but it was hoped that the services the Youth Zone provided would compliment the services of the City Council. If there was an impact assessment then it would be the responsibility of all of the partners to carry it out.

The Chairman reminded the Panel the Youth Zone would be considered by the Panel in January 2011 so an informed view could be taken on the success of the Youth Zone.

- *The report did not include Carlisle College as part of the strategic joint up approach.*

Ms Huntington responded that Carlisle College were an integral part of the NEETs work and would include it in future reports.

RESOLVED –1) That the Panel receive an annual update on the activities contributing to supporting young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).

2) That the Panel receive a copy of the final report and exit strategy that will be prepared for the end of the Lottery bid funding regarding the Play Strategy.

COSP.35/11 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the minutes) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

COSP.36/11 TRANSFORMATION UPDATE – THE COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND HEALTH SERVICE

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 2)

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) presented report CD.02/11 which gave an update on progress with regard to the transformation and restructure process linked to the Communities, Housing and Health Service within the Community Engagement Directorate.

Mr Gerrard reported that the merging together of the three service areas under a single management structure had been completed and the new Head of Communities Housing and Health began on 17 January 2011.

He informed the Panel of the appointments made to posts in the new structure and outlined the programme of development, team building and work planning that was scheduled for the new and existing teams.

RESOLVED – That the detailed update from the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) be welcomed.

COSP.37/11 MEMBERS COMMENTS

The Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel thanked the Chairman for her continued dedication and hard work throughout the year.

(The meeting ended at 12.10pm)