

## **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, 26 AUGUST 2004 AT 10.00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Boaden (Chairman), Councillors Bowman, Crookdake (as Substitute for Councillor Earp), Hendry, Parsons, Rutherford K, Scarborough and Tootle.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Bloxham, Knapton and Bowman M attended the meeting as Portfolio Holders (Councillor Bowman attended for the afternoon session only).

### **COS.118/04 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An Apology for Absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Earp.

### **COS.119/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest on any items on the Agenda.

### **COS.120/04 AGENDA**

**RESOLVED** – (1) That it be noted that Item A.15 – Local Government Act 2003 – Regulation of Cosmetic Piercing and Skin Colouring Businesses had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

(2) That the Appendices relating to Report Ref CLS.012/04 – East Cumbria Countryside Project be moved from the private part of the Agenda into the public part of the Agenda as they did not contain any information which necessitated the exclusion of the Public and Press. The Appendices would be considered at the same time as the main report.

### **COS.121/04 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 28 and 29 June 2004 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record. The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2004 (copies tabled at the meeting) were noted.

### **COS.122/04 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager advised Members that the Special meeting of the Committee on 6 August 2004 to consider a call-in on “Appointments as Representatives on Outside Bodies” had referred the matter

back to the Executive. The Executive, on 17 August 2004, had considered this matter and their official response would be reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

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

RESOLVED – That it be noted that the Executive's response will be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

## **COS.123/04 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager presented the Work Programme for this Committee for 2004/05 and highlighted the following matters:-

(a) A workshop with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership will be held on 30 September 2004 at 10.00am.

(b) Meetings of the Evening and Night Time Economy Task Group had been arranged for 13 and 20 October 2004 to collect evidence from external witnesses and another meeting had been arranged for 14 September 2004 to consider the Draft Licensing Policy.

In response to a Member's question, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager advised that the Licensing Policy would be considered by this Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2004. This programming would mean that the Committee would be able to consider the Draft Policy along with the responses from various external organisations who had been consulted on the Draft Licensing Policy.

(c) Local Air Quality Monitoring had been programmed for 18 November 2004.

(d) In relation to other subject reviews which Members may wish to undertake in this municipal year, Members were asked to forward any suggestions for reviews to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager who would collate them and submit them to the next meeting of this Committee.

(e) Democratic Engagement Best Value Review – In response to a Member's question, Mr Mallinson advised that this Review would be monitored at six monthly intervals.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Work Programme be noted.

(2) That Members of the Committee forward any suggestions for Subject Reviews during the 2004/05 municipal year to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager, who would collate them and submit them to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

## **COS.124/04      FORWARD PLAN – ITEMS RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager presented Report LDS.41/04 highlighting the Forward Plan (1 September to 31 December 2004) issues which fall within the remit of this Committee.

A Member referred to KD.036/04 – Contract with Carlisle Housing Association, which was scheduled for a decision to be taken at the Executive meeting on 8 November 2004 and to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny on 18 November 2004. She was concerned that the Executive may be making a decision about modifying the contract before the matter is scrutinised by this Committee. The Executive Director (M Mooney) undertook to investigate this further and examine whether the Report could be submitted to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee before 8 November 2004.

In relation to KD.033/04 – Gypsy and Traveller Protocol – it was noted that the Forward Plan stated that the Protocol did not need to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny as it had been formed through extensive consultation including the City Council. Members commented that they had not been aware of any such consultation and suggested that they would like to have an input to the Gypsy and Traveller Protocol. The Portfolio Holder supported this view and expressed concern that this County wide document had been formed through consultation, but yet no Member had been aware of this matter. The Committee asked to see the Gypsy and Traveller Protocol at their next meeting on 7 October 2004.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Forward Plan (1 September to 31 December 2004) issues within the Ambit of this Committee be noted.

(2) That the Executive Director (M Mooney) liaise with the Head of Environmental Protection Services and the Overview and Scrutiny Manager arrange for a report on the Contract with Carlisle Housing Association to be submitted to this Committee in advance of a final decision on the contract being made by the Executive.

(3) That this Committee requests an opportunity to scrutinise the Report on Gypsy and Traveller Protocol (KD.033/04 in the Forward Plan) and that the Overview and Scrutiny Manager programme consideration of this matter in for the next meeting of the Committee on 6 October 2004.

## **COS.125/04      RESPONSES FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered the following Executive responses to matters raised originally by this Committee:-

**(a) EX.149/04 – Talkin Tarn**

The Executive on 19 July 2004 had considered a reference from this Committee indicating that the Committee supports the Executive's decision that it wishes, in principle, to proceed with the transfer of ownership of Talkin Tarn and the continued negotiation with the County Council, particularly in respect of the inclusion of the hotel. The Executive had responded as follows:-

“That the support of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted”.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that a report on Talkin Tarn was due for consideration later in the Agenda.

RESOLVED – That the Executive's response be noted.

**(b) EX.150/04 – Monitoring Rural Policy**

The Executive, on 19 July 2004, had considered a reference from this Committee outlining comments of the Committee on the Monitoring of Rural Policy. The Executive had responded as follows:-

“That the specific comments of the Community and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted and taken into account in future reports on Rural Policy Monitoring”.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that a Report on Rural Strategy – Action Plan Review was due for consideration later in the Agenda.

RESOLVED – That the Executive's response be noted.

**(c) EX.156/04 – Sheepmount Bridge**

The Executive, on 19 July 2004, had considered a reference from this Committee commenting on the options for the Sheepmount Bridge. The Executive had responded as follows:-

“(1) – That Option 3 be selected as the preferred option for increasing the load capacity of the Sheepmount Bridge.

(2) – That the Executive recommend the City Council to allocate a supplementary estimate of £50,000 to enable detailed preparation of the preferred option.”

The Portfolio Holder stressed the importance of keeping the issues of the Sheepmount Project and the Sheepmount Bridge as separate reports, although, in response to Members' comments, he accepted that this

Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee should continue to have overall oversight of the Sheepmount Bridge.

Members commented that they understood why the Sheepmount Project and Sheepmount Bridge should be kept as separate reports but emphasised that this Committee had played a crucial role in scrutinising the Sheepmount Project and would continue a similar role in relation to the Sheepmount Bridge. The Chairman referred to the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee (COS.114/04) when the Sheepmount Bridge had been considered and he stressed that, the next report on the Sheepmount Bridge should address the detailed comments made at that meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Executive's response be noted.

(2) That the Committee continues to have an oversight and scrutiny role in relation to the Sheepmount Bridge but accepts that the Sheepmount Project and Sheepmount Bridge would be kept as separate reports.

(3) That, in the next report on the Sheepmount Bridge, the Head of Commercial and Technical Services address the points raised by the Committee at its meeting on 15 July 2004 (Minute Reference COS.114/04).

#### **COS.126/04 SHEEPMOUNT PROJECT UPDATE – AUGUST 2004**

The Head of Culture, Leisure and Sport presented Report CLS.011/04 which was a second Update Report on the Sheepmount Project and included details from the latest site meeting held on 9 August 2004. Mr Beveridge added that the Risk Register was on the Agenda for consideration during the private part of the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Committee should move into the private part of the meeting for consideration of the Risk Register at the same time as the Sheepmount Update Report.

#### **COS.127/04 PUBLIC 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 it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the Paragraph Number (as indicated in brackets against the Minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

**COS.128/04 SHEEPMOUNT PROJECT UPDATE AND RISK REGISTER**  
(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 8).

The Head of Culture, Leisure and Sport then gave an update on progress to date with the Sheepmount Project highlighting:-

(a) Actual progress against the Project Plan

(b) The updated Risk Register which shows the changes in the risks identified prior to the commencement of the Contract and where, if any, cost amendments have occurred within the budgets identified within the Register.

(c) Finance – Payments for the project are through a series of valuations of the work completed by Kier and their subcontractors. The valuations are agreed by Capita who assess the valuation Kier have made and any invoices are then paid by the City Council.

(d) A number of minor amendments which had been made to the design as a result of discussions with Carlisle Leisure Limited, Building Control and the City Council.

(e) The overall project has been progressing well although the substantial rainfall over the past couple of weeks may have an effect on progress, particularly in relation to drainage on the football pitches.

In scrutinising the report, Members then raised the following issues:-

(i) There was a question over the assurances that the percentage of work completed was a realistic assessment of actual progress. Mr Beveridge advised that percentage completion related to the Project Plan and was an approximation reported by Kiers.

(ii) Part M Building Regulations – Members were concerned that there were additional costs associated with Part M Building Regulations, which are Regulations which had to come into force to make a building fully accessible. They commented that the Disability Discrimination Act Regulations had been in the pipeline for a long time and all contractors should have been fully aware of them. Mr Beveridge responded that the Part M Building Regulations had come in after the Disability Discrimination Act and had changed the parameters, although the changes involved were not significant. There had been some design changes but these were not fundamental.

(iii) In response to Members' questions about additional costs submitted by Kiers, Mr Beveridge outlined the role of Capita in challenging and seeking justification for any additional costs. This would be further enhanced by the appointment of a Site Supervisor on a part time basis to monitor that the contractor is delivering to specification.

(iv) Site Visits – In response to a Members question about frequency of site visits, Mr Beveridge stated that it would be useful for the Committee to visit at key stages of the project and these would include early October 2004, just prior to or post New Year and at the end of March 2005. If additional site visits were required beyond these dates, these would be arranged as necessary.

The Chairman then commented that he had circulated to all Members correspondence which he had received from Mrs Whalley regarding the naming of the project. He requested that the Head of Culture, Leisure and Sport address the issues raised in this correspondence in his next report to the Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Sheepmount Project Update, including the Updated Risk Register be noted.

(2) That it be noted that site visits would be arranged for early October, just prior to or just post New Year and at the end of March 2005, with additional visits to be arranged as necessary.

(3) That the format of the monitoring report be endorsed as one which is helpful to the Committee in monitoring the Project.

(4) That the Head of Culture, Leisure and Sport deal with the correspondence from Mrs Whalley in his next report to the Committee on 6 October 2004.

#### **COS.129/04 PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED – That the remainder of the meeting be conducted in the presence of the Public and Press.

#### **COS.130/04 PROPOSED TRANSFER OF TALKIN TARN FROM COUNTY COUNCIL TO CITY COUNCIL**

The Head of Culture Leisure and Sport presented a report by the Head of Property Services (PS.16/04) on the proposed transfer of Talkin Tarn from the County Council to the City Council. Mr Beveridge explained that the Head of Property Services was unable to attend the meeting and he presented the report in his absence.

Members were reminded that the Executive, at its meeting on 26 April 2004 (EX.094/04) had confirmed that it wished, in principal, to proceed with the transfer of ownership of Talkin Tarn, subject to final terms being negotiated which the Executive were able to approve.

Taking into account community needs, it was intended that the City Council propose to take ownership and responsibility of the Talking Tarn estate and then invest in its refurbishment, renewal and environmental enhancement

through a pro active strategy. The freehold title of Talkin Tarn estate would transfer from the County Council to the City Council with a programme of building works to commence to update the estate to a standard similar to City Council assets over a period of three years. Mr Beveridge outlined the programme of works which will be involved, the pro-active management ethos which would be introduced on the site and the aspects which will be included in a five year management plan.

City Council Officers were currently working on costed options through the appointment of architects, compiling detailed estimates of capital and revenue costs, setting out budgetary implications and preparing a detailed business plan. It was noted that there would be a budget shortfall because Talkin Tarn would have to be run as a community asset and new income sources would need to help pay for the scheme, these would be fully detailed in the business plan.

The proposed timetable included a capacity for a full and detailed report with all the potential benefits, capital and revenue costs and a comprehensive business plan to be submitted to a special meeting of this Committee during October 2004. The Portfolio Holder commented that the report which would be submitted to the special meeting of this Committee would enable full scrutiny of the detailed costs and business plan. He emphasised the benefits and the possibilities for the Talkin Tarn area and advised that in compiling the business plan, a number of options were being investigated which would lead to the overall improvement of the Tarn and enhance potential for its use by the public of Carlisle.

In considering the report Members commented on and raised the following issues:

(a) Members sought assurances that the next report to the Committee would contain a comprehensive and detailed business plan which would enable Members to scrutinise the proposal in detail and which would provide full and detailed costs and revenue implications which would enable the Council to make a fully informed decision.

The Portfolio Holder gave assurances that such a comprehensive business plan would be included with the report.

(b) Options for dealing with the blue/green algae and associated costs should be clearly set out in the report to the next meeting of the Committee as this was a significant issue. Mr Beveridge advised that this would be included in the next report.

(c) In relation to paragraph 6.1 of the report on the elements of work which are being undertaken in order to provide appropriate advice, a Member commented that all of the information outlined in that paragraph would need to be included in the report to the next meeting, this would include proper costings for remedial work, means of dealing with the blue/green algae and associated costs and options for catering etc. All these matters would need to



be clearly set out in order that it was totally transparent what the Council would be taking on.

(d) Members referred to the surveys which had been conducted in relation to community needs, the most recent of which was a Talkin Tarn customer attitude survey which had been conducted in the year 2000. They suggested that some of this information may now be out of date and that there needs to be an up to date survey of public wishes for the Tarn.

Councillor Bloxham commented that a consultation meeting with invited stakeholders had been programmed for October 2004 and that wants and needs regarding the Tarn would be discussed at that meeting. He accepted that people's wants and needs did need to be examined.

(e) A detailed Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared outlining the implications for wildlife, flora and fauna and seeking a balance between the wants and needs of people for the Talkin Tarn and the impact on the environment in the area.

The Portfolio Holder advised that East Cumbria Countryside Project had been involved with this and the environmental impact was of great concern to everyone involved.

(f) In response to a Member's question about the negotiations with the County Council on the transfer of Talkin Tarn, the Portfolio Holder stated that he believed that the City Council had got the best deal possible from the negotiations.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report, including the proposed timetable for proceeding, be noted.

(2) That the comments of the Committee be referred to the Executive as outlined above be taken on board by Officers in the preparation of a report to be submitted to a special meeting of this Committee. That report should include a full and detailed business plan setting out the implications and costs of various options which would enable an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal.

(3) That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager liaise with the Chairman to agree a date for a special meeting of this Committee to consider the next report on Talkin Tarn.

**COS.131/04      REFERENCE FROM THE CORPORATE RESOURCES  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PROVISIONAL  
CAPITAL OUTTURN AND CAPITAL DETERMINATIONS –  
2003/04 AND REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05**

With reference to CRS.103/04, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager advised that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee had

considered report FS.12/04 on the 2003/04 Provisional Outturn for the Council's Capital Programme, Capital Determinations for 2003/04 and details of the Revised Capital Programme for 2004/05. In considering the report, Members of that Committee had commented on issues relating to right to buy receipts, the impact of right to buy on a reducing stock of properties held by Carlisle Housing Association and the current state of the Council's hostels and the importance of hostel provision, particularly in relation to the Council's role with the Housing Strategy.

Members commented that the issues raised by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee all had implications which could be subsumed within Housing Strategy and they agreed to consider these during the next item of business on the agenda.

RESOLVED – That the points raised by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to right to buy receipts, the impact of right to buy sales on a reducing stock of Carlisle Housing Association properties and the current state of the Council's hostels be considered during discussions on the Housing Strategy, which was the next item of business on the agenda.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am and reconvened at 11:20 am.*

## **COS.132/04     HOUSING STRATEGY**

The Head of Environmental Protection Services presented report EPS.50/04 which included the draft Housing Strategy for the period 2004 to 2009. The Council has a duty to produce the Strategy, which must clearly define the priorities and resources which will be devoted to meeting the Government's ambitions for "Building Sustainable Communities" and "Balancing Housing Markets".

The Executive on 17 August 2004 had considered the draft strategy and had approved it as a basis of formal consultation and referred it to this Committee.

Mr Speirs and Mr Taylor, Housing Services and Health Partnerships attended the meeting to present the report and answer Members' questions.

In considering and discussing the draft Housing Strategy, Members raised the following matters:-

(a) A Member referred to the identified priorities and the statement that one of the priorities was "to provide 60 units of hostel and homeshare accommodation to single persons and families". A Member queried whether 60 was adequate in light of the increase in homelessness and the reduction in properties available from registered social landlords through the increase in Rights to Buy of properties.

Mr Speirs advised that 60 was the current number of hostel and homeshare accommodation units and he stated that this would have to be further revised as the strategy moves forward. He advised that the Strategy would be subject to continual revision and development in the light of changing needs and demand and he agreed that homelessness was changing rapidly. He commented that it was not just a case of increasing the number of units available, but of working proactively to address root causes of homelessness and to seek to reduce the number of people declaring themselves to be homeless.

(b) Hostel Provision – Members sought clarification on progress with the review of hostel accommodation and raised the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee's concerns about the current state of the Council's hostels.

Mr Speirs responded that the revision of staffing in hostels had been completed but that further developments with the Hostels Review had been held up. Currently, discussions were being held with Impact Housing Association, as the other major hostel provider in the City, and with other registered social landlords to investigate ways in which the Council can work with these Agencies to address the growing problem of homelessness and the growing requirement for hostel provision. Discussions were also being held with Supporting People and with the Government.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had been made aware of the Council's concerns regarding the current situation and Government Auditors had asked the Council to provide information which would help the Government to make decisions on what is happening with homelessness strategy. Members echoed the concern that the lack of onward accommodation for people in hostels was effectively leading to hostel blocking and a lack of places available for people declaring themselves as homeless.

(c) Members recognised the statutory role of the Council in setting proposals to address housing demand and conditions in their locality. However, they questioned the capacity within the City Council to bring all the different organisations and agencies involved together and enable them to work effectively to address problems of homelessness and provisions for the homeless.

(d) Members were particularly concerned about people coming out of probation or finishing custodial sentences and the need to find appropriate accommodation which would enable them to move on with their lives and to reduce the risk of them re-offending.

Mr Speirs recognised the difficulties in this area and also with the number of other people who have alcohol or drug-related problems or psychiatric problems. It was often a challenge getting registered social landlords to take particularly vulnerable people on. He then outlined the current arrangements and discussions taking place with other agencies and registered social landlords to seek to address these problems.

(e) The Council's role in taking a lead in relation to Housing Strategy was recognised. The Executive Director commented that the Housing Strategy Group needs to be reviewed and streamlined to ensure that it became a truly strategic group leading the process. Members commented that there had been a number of issues and concerns in relation to homelessness and the need for a comprehensive hostel review and suggested that a separate report on homelessness and hostel provision be prepared, identifying the issues at the heart of these problems.

(f) Members queried why the Housing Corporation had not invested in any housing schemes in Carlisle over the last twelve months and asked what was being done to address this.

Mr Speirs advised that the City Council had hosted a meeting bringing together registered social landlords, Government Office North West and the Regional Director for the Housing Corporation to outline what needs to be done within the area and to establish what assistance they can bring. He advised that the difficulties in relation to the Housing Corporation were that it covered an area of the North West and that Carlisle was often competing for funds against conurbations such as Merseyside and Manchester.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Housing Corporation had required bids to be on a regional basis and that very often Carlisle were out-bid within the Cumbria context.

Mr Speirs explained that in order to secure Housing Corporation funding, evidence of housing need was required and resources were being used to research and establish that housing need which would support any bids to the Housing Corporation. He advised that the post which had been created from the funding from the Second Homes Council Tax would be utilised to establish the needs. In addition, a research officer had been establishing housing need in the Morton area and it was hoped that this would be extended throughout the District.

(g) A Member queried the intention to use the monies generated from capital receipts on Rights to Buy and suggested that these should be set aside for the Council's strategic role in housing-related matters. Members suggested that this should be reflected within the Action Plan on Housing Strategy. The Action Plan should also clearly set out all resource implications and there should be specific actions against each identified priority.

(h) The Action Plan attached to the Housing Strategy needs to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Framed, if the Committee is to adequately fulfil its monitoring role. Members emphasised the need for the Strategy and the Action Plan to be a living, breathing document which meets the requirements of the Council as well as meeting the requirements of Government Office North West.

(i) The need for a commitment to a local Housing Strategy was stressed. The Executive Director and Portfolio Holder commented that there were suggestions that a Cumbria Housing Strategy be developed but they emphasised the importance of having a Carlisle Housing Strategy which was specific to the issues, concerns and needs within Carlisle.

(j) Members then referred to the proposed timetable for consideration of the Housing Strategy and the programming of the Executive agreeing the final draft on 11 October 2004. They commented that there was no time built in for the Strategy to be reported back to this Committee and they suggested that it could be considered at the next meeting of this Committee on 7 October 2004.

RESOLVED – (1) That the comments of the Committee as outlined above be forwarded to the Executive and taken into account by Officers in the preparation of the Housing Strategy.

(2) That the Head of Environmental Protection Services prepare a separate report to a future meeting of this Committee on the issues of homelessness and hostel review.

(3) That this Committee requests an opportunity to consider the final draft of the Housing Strategy at its meeting on 7 October 2004 in advance of approval of the Strategy by the Executive on 11 October 2004.

(4) The Committee then thanked the Head of Environmental Protection Services for his input.

#### **COS.133/04 DIVERSITY POLICY – RACE EQUALITY SCHEME – UPDATE OF FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN**

The Executive Director presented Report SP.36/04 explaining the Council's duties under Race Relations legislation and describing work that must be undertaken in the near term to become fully compliant with that legislation.

The Executive on 17 August (EX.164/04) had considered the report and had:

(1) noted the legal requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Equality Standard for Local Government for the City Council acting to achieve a greater level of equality for all in Carlisle;

(2) accepted the Race Equality Scheme, subject to further periodic updates as the Council's work in this area develops;

(3) agreed to further work being undertaken in Race Equality and other equality areas, along best practice lines, with progress reports to the Executive on a regular basis;

(4) submitted the reports to this Committee for consideration and comment;

(5) would consider appointing a Member champion for equalities when the report is further considered by the Executive.

The report enclosed the revised Race Equality Scheme which would meet the City Council's obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which places a general duty on listed public authorities to actively promote Race Equality through :

(a) eliminating unlawful discrimination;

(b) promoting equal opportunities;

(c) promoting good race relations.

The Executive Director invited the comments of Members on the revised Race Equality Scheme.

Members then commented on and discussed the following matters :

(a) The report would benefit from the inclusion of statistics on incidents of racism and informed comments from agencies such as the Police in order to provide better information on circumstances and incidents.

(b) A Member commented that the Race Equality Scheme was to be part of a wider Diversity Policy within the original Forward Plan, and he requested information on the timescale for producing that Diversity Policy.

The Executive Director advised that she did not have a timescale for the production of the Diversity Policy but advised that she would raise this with the Head of Strategic and Performance Services and report back to a future meeting.

(c) A Member referred to the Council's requirements to assess the impact of its policies and services on minority groups under a process termed the Impact Assessment. The Council had not yet taken any steps to introduce impact assessment, so the initial work to put that right would be particularly resource intensive. There was a query as to where the resources for that work would come from.

The Executive Director responded that the Race Equality Scheme work was currently being undertaken by the Strategic and Performance Services Unit but there would be a need to look at the resource implications and where the final responsibility for this work would lie.

(d) Suggestions were also made about the links with Housing Strategy, Education and particularly the Citizenship Programme being run in schools. It was suggested that the Communications Section could include aspects of the Race Equality Scheme within their Citizenship Programme.

RESOLVED – (1) That the comments of the Committee as outlined above be forwarded to the Executive.

(2) That the Head of Strategic and Performance Services report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the timetable for production of a Diversity Policy.

(3) That the Communications Manager be asked to look at the inclusion of aspects of the Race Equality Scheme within the Citizenship Programme being run in schools.

(4) The Committee looks forward to further developments in this area.

#### **COS.134/04 EAST CUMBRIA COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT**

The Head of Culture, Leisure and Sport submitted Report CLS.12/04 regarding the future of the East Cumbria Countryside Project (ECCP).

At the Council Meeting on 3 August 2004, the issue of the future of ECCP was raised in a question relating to the Joint Carlisle and Eden Committee Meeting held on 14 May 2004. The Chairman of this Committee had therefore requested that this report be submitted to the Committee to enable Members to contribute to the issues raised.

Mr Beveridge introduced Mr Gray of ECCP.

The Committee had previously agreed that the Appendices to this report should be considered during the public part of the meeting, so the whole report was considered at this time.

The Report detailed the role of ECCP, including its relationship with Local Authority partners, namely Cumbria County Council, Eden District Council and Carlisle City Council, who are all joint funders of ECCP. The report also detailed the contribution that ECCP makes to the Council and provided details of some of the projects which ECCP has been involved in.

ECCP has an annual funding gap between core costs and core income from Local Authority partners. As an existing organisation, ECCP cannot receive external funding for core costs and the gap has therefore to be met from other sources including contract works, fees and sales. Options for the future of ECCP beyond 2008 were currently being considered and the options were detailed, these included :

(a) maintaining status quo;

(b) quasi independent status (community enterprise);

(c) mainstreaming within Local Authority departments.

These longer term options would have to be considered if ECCP is to respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities arising in this new and still changing context.

In response to a Member's question, Mr Gray provided details of the type of work which ECCP undertakes and the impact this had for residents of the Carlisle urban and rural areas. In particular he focused on the work undertaken in maintaining footpaths around the city, work on disabled access and health promotion work. ECCP were also involved in discussions on proposals for Talkin Tarn.

A Member queried the option about quasi independent status (community enterprise), commenting that he thought a Trust was more of an independent body and that if Trust status was being sought this was not essentially quasi independent.

Mr Beveridge responded that thinking has moved on and that the option was more likely to be Trust status as an independent body under a charitable trust as a legal entity in its own right.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Council was keeping an open mind at this stage, but that it was good for organisations of this kind to look at the best ways of attracting other external funding. A lot more information would have to be gathered and options considered before any decisions are made.

Mr Beveridge summarised the discussion saying that there was an issue of funding ECCP and that options were being looked at. A Trust may or may not be the best options and further examination of the options would have to be undertaken and reported back to Members at a future time.

A Member expressed hope that ECCP would be fully involved in any plans and discussions in relation to Talkin Tarn.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Committee stresses the importance of involving ECCP in discussions and formulation of options on Talkin Tarn.

(3) That the Committee looks forward to further reports in relation to the future of ECCP.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12.35 and reconvened at 1.05 pm.*

*Councillor Parsons left the meeting just before the afternoon session but returned at 2.00 pm.*



#### **COS.135/04     SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE**

RESOLVED – That Council Procedure Rule 9, in relation to the duration of meetings, be suspended in order that the meeting could continue over the time limit of three hours.

#### **COS.136/04     PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF THE BUSINESS PLAN: PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The Policy and Performance Manager submitted Report SP.37/04 by the Head of Strategic and Performance Services outlining proposed improvements in the quarterly reporting of Council business and progress towards objectives.

The reasons why the improvements are considered necessary were outlined and the following proposed improved system detailed. There would be one quarterly report produced addressing the performance of all twelve Business Units (a summary of performance for each Business Unit) along with quarterly performance indicator returns and corporate financial returns. There would effectively be 3 sections to quarterly Business Reports in the future :

- (a) A quarterly Performance Indicator Report covering the whole organisation;
- (b) A quarterly Financial Report covering the whole organisation, and
- (c) A Narrative Performance Summary for each Business Unit.

A Member raised a concern that although the new reporting system would provide an opportunity to compare performance of Business Units, there may be less detailed information for each Business Unit which could make it difficult for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to monitor performance in a meaningful way.

The Executive Director commented that the new reporting system would provide a whole Council view. She stressed that if Members used the new system and found that it was not providing enough information to allow adequate monitoring, the system would be reviewed and changes made as necessary.

RESOLVED – (1) That the reasons for making changes to the Business Reporting system be noted.

(2) That the comments and concerns of the Committee in relation to the amount of detailed information available be taken on board.

(3) That the new system of Performance Monitoring of Business Plans be kept under review by Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Officers involved.

**COS.137/04 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORTS –  
ANNUAL REPORTS AND PERFORMANCE SUMMARY  
2003-04 AND FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE  
INDICATOR REPORT 2004-05.**

The Performance Officer submitted Report SP.31/04 appraising Members of the Performance Indicator (PI) results for 2003/04 and for the first three months of 2004/05 (1 April to 30 June 2004).

In considering the Performance Indicator information, Members commented that the late return of Performance information from Officers should not be affected by staff illness as other Officers should be capable of producing the information. Dr Coleman responded that systems were being put in place and methodologies adopted so that this should not happen in the future.

In response to a Member's question, she advised that two of the Best Value Performance Indicators in relation to Benefits and Planning had been deleted after national consultation with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

A Member commented that there was a PI for racial incidents recorded by Authority per 100,000 population (BV174). He stated that this may be of some use in relation to the Race Equality Scheme discussed earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

**COS.138/04 RURAL STRATEGY ACTION PLAN REVIEW**

The Head of Economic and Community Development submitted Report ECD.16/04 on the Rural Strategy Action Plan Review. Ms Rankin, Rural Community Support Officer, advised that the Rural Strategy – Listening to the Rural Voice, was published in July 2003 and that at the time of publication the Council committed to review the Action Plan tables on an annual basis. The revised Action Plan attached to the Report provided a summary of progress and the Report also outlined Initiatives and Projects which had been completed since the publication of the Strategy.

Ms Rankin commented that due to the overarching role of the Rural Strategy, the Action Plans tend to encompass a wide range of actions and initiatives. This is essential to reflect the breadth of activities happening in the rural area and to assist with the co-ordination of efforts, but due to the nature of Action Plans it was sometimes difficult to assess the relative priority of actions. The Report therefore set out overall priorities within the Rural Strategy. The priorities were not listed in order of importance but reflected the order in which they appeared in the Action Plan.

Ms Rankin then outlined the Performance Measurement Scheme which was being put in place. This would be based on the building of a Rural Evidence

Base using a DEFRA Model. In addition, there would be Customer Satisfaction work undertaken to obtain the views and satisfaction of people in the rural area. She advised that this aspect was less well-developed at this stage but work was being undertaken including Best Value surveys and Citizens Panel results to set a base line. It was anticipated that the Citizens Panel could be used for Customer Satisfaction measurements.

The Chairman then introduced Ms Pauline Dalton, the Vice-Chairman of Carlisle Parish Councils Association, who commented that she was happy with the way that the Rural Strategy Action Plans were progressing.

In commenting on the Report, the following matters were raised by Members:-

(a) The provision of transport for people in the rural area, particularly the elderly, needs to be addressed, although this has partially been done through the Rural Wheels Scheme which supplements public transport provision. Other concerns related to restrictions on HGVs in small towns and villages and the effect they have on local businesses and tourism, particularly in relation to Hadrian's Wall.

(b) Concerns over the amount of affordable housing in the rural area. Members highlighted the need to demonstrate housing need in these areas and suggested that the Housing Enabling Officer post could be involved in this. Ms Rankin responded that Officers needed to produce evidence of the need for affordable housing and the Housing Enabling Officer post could have a key role in carrying out a Needs Assessment with Parish Councils and local groups to document this and present this to the Housing Corporation.

(c) Progress towards the Quality Parish Councils Scheme was discussed and it was recognised that Parish Planning is developing well.

RESOLVED – (1) That the comments of the Committee as set out above are the official observations of the Committee on the Rural Strategy Action Plans Review and Priorities as set out in the Report.

(2) That Officers be thanked for a very helpful Report and the Committee looks forward to the next update.

#### **COS.139/04 CRIME AND DISORDER UPDATED ACTION PLAN**

The Crime and Disorder Officer presented Report ECD.08/04 on the Crime and Disorder Updated Action Plan.

The Report included details of performance on Best Value Performance Indicators. Mr O'Keefe commented that the Domestic Burglaries Indicator was the only one which was on target and that the Indicator's relating to violent offences and vehicle crimes were currently not on target.

The Report also contained information on the response to the Fear of Crime Indicator in the Citizens Panel Questionnaire and the Partnership's performance as compared with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in Carlisle's family group of Best Value Performance Indicators. Whilst performance on domestic burglary was below average, performance on violent crime and vehicle crime were above average for the group.

Mr O'Keefe then highlighted an excerpt from the Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Audit which included details of the type of work the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator was undertaking, including Anti-Social Behaviour Road Shows in schools, the mapping of a Multi-Agency Anti-Social Behaviour Intervention Panel and information on case conferences which had been held. The Report finally provided an updated Action Plan which informed Members of progress since the first meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman of the Committee commented that the format of the Report needs to be looked at quite carefully. He commented that it was a collection of disparate information which was useful, but there was frequent repetition from previous reports and that this was not helpful for the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He suggested that the Workshop which was being held with the Crime and Disorder Partnership on 30 September 2004 would be an appropriate time to look at the format of reporting to this Committee and discuss the Committee's role in monitoring and the most effective means of allowing this monitoring to take place.

A Member commented that the perception of crime as included in the information from the Citizens Panel does not appear to match the crime figures and he suggested that it may have been more helpful to ask the Citizens Panel a further question about why they felt unsafe at night. This may provide an opportunity to identify specific issues which could be addressed e.g. improved street lighting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Report be noted.

(2) That the format of future Monitoring Reports be discussed at the Workshop with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership on 30 September 2004.

#### **COS.140/04 FURTHER RESPONSES TO THE POST FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH MATTERS REVIEW FINAL REPORT**

With reference to Minute COS.110/04, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager submitted Report OS.09/04 detailing further information received from various agencies following the Committee's review of the initial responses to its final report on the Post Foot and Mouth Disease Environmental and Health Matters.

Mr Mallinson outlined the responses which he had received since the last meeting and highlighted the fact that he is still to receive responses from DEFRA and Rural Regeneration Cumbria. He would continue to pursue these responses and he had sent another copy of the Report to DEFRA as they were unable to locate the original letter seeking their response.

Mr Mallinson added that he would provide further responses as he received them and he suggested that it may be useful, after the publication of the Lancaster University Research Project, to invite Dr Mort back to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the responses be noted.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager continue to pursue a response from DEFRA and Rural Regeneration Cumbria.

(3) That, after publication of the Lancaster University Research Project, Dr Mort be invited to a future meeting of this Committee.

#### **COS.141/04 BENEFITS ADVICE SERVICE UPDATE**

With reference to Minute COS.108/04(b), the Head of Economic and Community Development presented Report ECD.17/04 updating Members on the progress on the work of the Benefits Advice Service (BAS) following the completion of the Benefits Advice Centre Review earlier this year.

Ms Elliot advised that after long term absences had been resolved, it was anticipated that from the beginning of September, the service would be fully staffed. The newly created post of Advice Services Co-ordinator, which would operate independently from the BAS should, in time, lead to a much improved joining up of services across the City and would hopefully also bring in new resources to further enhance provision. In response to a Member's question, she advised that the post would carry out a corporate role within the Council and with external agencies to strengthen policy and strategy co-ordination in the area of Advice Services.

Ms Elliot then commented on the re-location of the Service to the Civic Centre and the renewed optimism amongst staff that progress has been made. After the Team have had a chance to settle, the service will be re-launched, focusing on its new name, new location and new ideas to improve public access. The current service provision was then outlined with details provided of times and locations of advice sessions.

In response to a Member's question, the Executive Director advised that discussions were being held with the Head of Public Health for Carlisle and Eden Primary Care Trust regarding the introduction of Benefits Advice sessions in GP surgeries throughout the City. This was something that the Council wanted to pursue, but currently there was an issue of capacity in fully staffing this matter, but discussions were continuing along these lines.

Members commented that it was encouraging to note that since September 2003, the total amount of money gained for clients, even with the limited service provided, still amounted to £458,802 and should reach £500,000 by the end of September 2004.

RESOLVED – That the Report be noted and the progress with the Benefits Advice Service be welcomed.

(The meeting ended at 2.10 pm)