

# Report to: Council

Agenda  
Item

**11(i)(b)**

Meeting Date: 10 September 2013

Public/Private\*: Public

Title: **Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Chairman's Report –  
Councillor Mrs Luckley**

---

## Meeting Dates – 11<sup>th</sup> July and 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2013

The first item on the July meeting's Agenda was a Call-in of a report on the proposed Council's Arts Centre development.

The reason for the Call-in was "Concerns over the doubling of capital costs."

The discussion on this subject is reported in the Minutes and at its conclusion, with agreement that the latest revenue projections would be added to the report to Council and the assurance that there would be further opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the project as it develops it was agreed not to refer the matter back to the Executive.

Later in the meeting, the Panel put questions regarding the potential activities planned for the Centre to the Director of Community Engagement and the Consultant who is advising the Council on its development.

The Panel received the Director of Community Engagement's report on the key findings of the Sports Facility Needs Assessment, together with a presentation by the Council's Consultant who carried out the assessment.

The assessment identified considerable needs in regard to: Sports Facilities for the rural areas, Swimming Pools, Football Pitches, the Health and Fitness Offer and an additional Sports Hall. The Consultants' full report will be available for the Panel in due course and the Panel look forward to scrutinising the resulting Council's Sports Facility Strategy when it is produced.

A report on the Council / Riverside Housing Partnership was scrutinised by the Panel. The report covered the Affordable Homes Programme, Disabled Facilities Grants, Welfare Reform, Land Assets and Homelessness.

Many of the questions centred around the effects of Welfare Reform and the changes in Benefits that came in in July. Riverside had made strenuous efforts to keep their tenants informed on the changes and contact had been made using various methods. A Welfare Reform Board has been set up with

representatives of the Council, Impact, Riverside and the DWP that pulls together information and focuses on those tenants most affected. The Panel requested updates on their work. A second Partnership report will come to the Panel later in the Municipal Year when more factual information on the effects of the changes should be available.

The Panel agreed on two Task and Finish Groups for this year, a Hate Crimes Review and Review of the Customer Access Strategy. The Hate Crimes Task Group have agreed the Terms of Reference and the scope of the review. The work is expected to take up to six months. The Customer Access Strategy Task Group found the Strategy satisfactory and agreed that the Members would make individual visits to the Contact Centre and meet again later in the year to discuss their findings, the outcomes of the Strategy and produce their report.

At the August meeting the Quarter One Performance Report and an update on the priorities in the Carlisle Plan were scrutinised. Only one performance report was within the Panel's remit. Average Number of Days to process new Benefit Claims.

A good performance continues for this service and, although overall the Council comes into the Department of Work and Pension's Second Quartile, in July and August, the Top Quartile requirement (6-18 days) was achieved. The IT systems had been improved but also the Officers delivering the service deserve congratulations.

Questions were asked about the Carlisle Plan's priorities in relation to progress on the Gypsy and Traveller Transit site. On the opportunities of further funding for the Empty Homes Project, plus the progress and funding of the Home Life Carlisle Project. Updated information on these subjects is expected at the next meeting.

The Panel received a report on the outcomes of the recent changes to the Council's Public CCTV system. Due to the reduction in staff manning, Officers are working on new policies and procedures under the Code of Practice to ensure that data protection and freedom of information requests are carried out within the stipulated times, 40 days and 28 days respectively. We were pleased to note that the downward figures continue for car crime in the Council car parks. Although generally the crime figures are lower in the Carlisle district, the offences against individuals continue to be worrying figures. The Panel learnt that the Constabulary are currently considering creating a county wide CCTV service but understand no decision on this proposal has yet been made.

Councillor Olwyn Luckley

Chairman