

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2015 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Nedved (Chairman), Councillors Bowditch, Christian, Dodd, Ms Franklin, Mitchelson and Watson (as substitute for Councillor Caig)

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Glover – Leader
Councillor Mrs Martlew – Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder
Councillor Mrs Bradley – Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillors Mallinson (J) and Mrs McKerrell (Observers)

Mr Graham Haywood – Director of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership

OFFICERS: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Resources
Director of Economic Development
Director of Local Environment
Policy and Performance Officer
Strategic Property Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

EEOSP.70/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Betton and Caig.

EEOSP.71/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

EEOSP.72/15 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That the Agenda be agreed as circulated.

EEOSP.73/15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Referring to the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2015 and, in particular Minute EEOSP.65/15, a Member questioned whether any feedback had been received on the issue of weed control in Carlisle.

In response the Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder explained that responsibility for weed control lay with the County Council, with that authority deciding when and where that took place. She had raised the matter in what were positive discussions with the Chairman of the Highways Committee and the Acting Director, in

addition to which the City Council's legal team had submitted items for inclusion in the Memorandum of Understanding with the County Council.

The Deputy Leader expressed the hope that the positive discussions alluded to would pave the way to a better working relationship between the two authorities and she would inform the Panel of the outcome as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2015 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

(2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2015 be noted.

EEOSP.74/15 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

EEOSP.75/15 CUMBRIA LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The Chairman introduced this item of business, commenting that the Director of Economic Development had prepared a report (ED.41/15) providing a briefing on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and update on the work of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership.

The report set out the background position, including the establishment of the Cumbria LEP and current membership of the Board; together with details of the current activity.

Carlisle had a major role to play in the broader Cumbria economy. As the only city in Cumbria, Carlisle was the service and retail centre particularly for the north of the county. It was well located and accessible with the M6 and the West Coast mainline running through the district and Carlisle station provided connections to international markets. The role Carlisle played was recognised in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and was prioritised.

A number of businesses had received LEP funding including Pirelli and the City Council received growth funded money for Durrhill to provide new road infrastructure to unlock employment sites delivering 150 jobs. Future projects included Carlisle Airport, the Citadel and surrounding area and the Enterprise Zone at Kingmoor Park.

The Chairman then extended a very warm welcome to Mr Graham Haywood, Director of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership. He added that the Chancellor had, as part of his Autumn Statement made announcements concerning the Enterprise Zone, Carlisle Station and the Airport all of which were very positive.

The Director of Economic Development reported that the City Council was working very hard with Cumbria LEP and they were supportive of the authority. She was therefore most pleased that Mr Haywood was in attendance today.

Mr Haywood apologised that he had been unable to attend the last Panel meeting due to pressure of work.

Mr Haywood proceeded to give a presentation on the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) programme.

By way of context in terms of governance, Mr Haywood explained that:

- membership of the Cumbria LEP Board had recently been refreshed to include four new private sector members which represented a significant change;
- the LEP had just taken part in a National Audit Office study on how the DCLG managed LEPs;
- the next step was the Annual Conversation during which the performance of the LEP was reviewed and he was optimistic that the LEP would progress to mid-table in the list of LEPs;
- direct scrutiny arrangements were being put in place (involving three District Council Leaders and three private sector representatives). That did not, however, mean that he and his colleagues would be unwilling to go to other Scrutiny meetings around the County to ensure that open dialogue took place

Turning to the issue of key plans and funds, Mr Haywood commented upon the need to have in place four plans (Investment, Skills, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing) and to have knowledge of where the funding necessary for delivery was coming from. Much of the funding was dependent upon ongoing discussions on the Devolution Bill. That was at the heart of what he was trying to do in terms of the delivery of work to drive economic growth across the county.

Mr Haywood also outlined in some detail the current position with regard to each of the Carlisle Schemes (Durrhill, Carlisle College, University Stem Labs, Carlisle Station, Citadel / Nisi Prius, Enterprise Zones and Carlisle Airport).

Although the above constituted positive news, there were areas around skills and housing which were very important for the delivery of economic growth.

The Chairman thanked Mr Haywood for his most informative overview.

Members raised the undernoted questions and observations:

- Communication was of key importance. What was the LEP's communication strategy?

Mr Haywood advised that Osprey had been engaged under a contract in the order of £25,000 pa and provided good value. The scope for a more expensive communication strategy was limited. However if the Devolution Bill came forward and there was greater certainty around the availability of funding, then communication was recognised as an area which should be increased.

- Could the Panel be of assistance to the Cumbria LEP in their Annual Conversation?

In response, Mr Haywood stated that there were thirty nine LEPs. The LEPs were listed in the league table as green, amber or red based upon their reputation for engagement and the Government's confidence.

The perception was that Cumbria was not as strong as areas such as Manchester or Leeds; that was not surprising due to the numbers involved. However, collectively Cumbria had taken action to address that perception which had surprised the Government. There was also a realisation within Government of all Cumbria had to offer.

The compilation and submission of Cumbria's high level proposition had highlighted the importance of Cumbria, which was why there was now a willingness in Government to help Cumbria deliver those massive economic opportunities.

- Was the LEP working with all local authorities in Cumbria?

Mr Haywood confirmed that was absolutely the case. He further emphasised the need to present a more united front externally which would reap rewards.

- Although the Enterprise Zone was a premier site the broadband service was poor. Had that been addressed?

Mr Haywood indicated that, from memory, the target for a project connecting Cumbria was 2019. Digital connectivity was also of key importance since many people made use of 4G.

The Director of Economic Development added that Kingmoor Park was working to improve broadband, and superfast broadband would be accelerated as part of the Enterprise Zone.

- Road / rail connections to the North East were very poor indeed (there was no dual carriageway from Carlisle to Hexham) which was of concern.

In response, Mr Haywood stated that the Cumbria Infrastructure Plan would have a number of priorities (including rail) and Carlisle Station represented a crucial hub in the network. Coastal rail was of significance to the LEP and he was unsure as to whether the rail infrastructure between Carlisle and Newcastle would be such a priority. He emphasised that rail was at the heart of making Cumbria more attractive.

Mr Haywood commented upon the need for connectivity, and summarised the studies being undertaken in conjunction with Highways England in relation to the road network.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder stressed that, although rail links to the west were important in terms of the nuclear new build, City Council Members were considering the road / rail network from a Carlisle perspective. The rail network from Carlisle to Newcastle was usable, but the service provided was awful and she was not filled with confidence that the LEP would do anything to improve matters.

From a geographical point of view, Carlisle looked to Newcastle for many services including health and economics, and again she was doubtful that the much needed support (LEP) would be forthcoming.

Whilst in agreement, Mr Haywood reiterated that Carlisle Station and the coastal line were stronger than the links from Carlisle to Newcastle in terms of priorities. That was not to say that the LEP would not support links with Newcastle. He added that the list of Carlisle Schemes outlined above was much more impressive than for other areas and the LEP was very focussed on Carlisle as a City.

- Would the road network to the west also constitute a higher priority for the LEP?

Mr Haywood said that was not the case. Studies into the road network were ongoing and the A595 was key; the aim being to ensure that Carlisle was better connected to the West. It should be noted that road / rail links went in both directions and, giving people in Carlisle the ability to tap into the market would be of real benefit to the City.

- The City Council had always championed Kingmoor Park and the nuclear link, and the list of Carlisle schemes was impressive. It was pleasing to note that would be maximised since it would have a knock on effect for the whole of the City. Developing Carlisle would be of benefit to all in the longer term.

Mr Haywood agreed with those sentiments. The benefit of a longer timeframe was a more programmed approach to planning. His aspiration was to have an increasingly impressive list of schemes to report upon when he visited local authorities.

The Cumbria LEP had £500,000 pa in its budget, a significant part of which was spent on strategic studies / practical projects. Post the Comprehensive Spending Review it was hoped that would evolve into a three year allocation, thus providing a greater level of certainty.

- As stated during the presentation, it was anticipated that the LEP's draft priorities would be submitted to the Board in December 2015. Accordingly the Panel looked forward to having sight of those and being afforded the opportunity to take part in the consultation process.

In response, Mr Haywood explained that consultation had been ongoing over the past few months and he did not anticipate that the top priorities would be contentious.

The Director of Economic Development added that many of the infrastructure requirements relative to the key projects were included within the Local Plan. A great deal of information was being fed to the LEP on that basis.

- A Member outlined in some detail his support for the Deputy Leader's comments regarding the rail network and unsatisfactory state / lack of maintenance of the rolling stock. He wished to impress the importance thereof upon Mr Haywood.

Mr Haywood replied that Transport for the North was the strategic body and Cumbria LEP was doing all that it could to get infrastructure into their 30 year Plan. The City Council could lobby Network Rail and the Department for Transport, and the LEP would be supportive.

- Did the Carlisle Schemes alluded to above hinge on the outcome of the Devolution?

In response, Mr Haywood advised that the schemes on the Carlisle list could be undertaken over time without devolution. They could, however, happen more quickly if a 5/10 year plan was in place.

- Improved access arrangements to the car park at Carlisle Station were of critical importance since commuters/visitors to Carlisle were effectively trapped for long periods trying to exit the car park.

District representation on the Cumbria LEP Board swapped every two years. Was Carlisle's position weakened as a result thereof and, given that the City was a major centre, was there a case for Carlisle to be continuously represented on the Board?

Mr Haywood summarised the constitutional arrangements, commenting that the Leader of the City Council had been a very powerful advocate for Carlisle at every opportunity. Nonetheless he assured the Panel that Carlisle was not disadvantaged by the Leader not sitting on the LEP Board.

The Deputy Leader was pleased to note that two of the priority schemes were Carlisle College and the University Stem Labs. She did, however, wish to make a plea for the LEP to do all that it could to ensure that the University was embedded and developed in Cumbria as opposed to Lancaster. That was of critical importance.

Mr Haywood reiterated that the Skills Plan was in the course of development and, following wide consultation, was likely to go forward to the January 2016 Board meeting. Importantly, the Skills Plan would focus upon and be driven by the needs of public / private sector employers and would therefore look different. A vibrant University could add a great deal to a City like Carlisle and Cumbria LEP was therefore very supportive thereof.

The Director of Economic Development commented upon the impressive nature of the University Stem Labs and looked forward to Phase 2. Mr Haywood expressed the hope that Phase 2 would be completed during the current financial year.

The Chairman was reassured by those comments. The City Council wished to contribute towards driving higher education and the University was central to that aim. He questioned Mr Haywood's perception of the skills deficit.

In response, Mr Haywood indicated that the issue was one of demographics i.e. the need to attract more skilled people to the area was becoming increasingly obvious. There was a severe skills shortage in the mid to senior levels upwards across most sectors, with a number of large employers expressing the need for degree level apprenticeships.

Skills planning therefore needed to address the amount and rate of training required to fill those gaps. A balanced view was required, with the very clear proviso that people were being trained to support the economy.

- Was thought being given to the availability of grant funding from the European Union to assist the LEP in its work?

Mr Haywood advised that the European regime was hugely complicated and was managed centrally by the DCLG. It was likely that the rural dimension of the programme would be devolved (around £9.2m) which constituted a good start. Other areas would be devolved over the coming years, which would help the LEP to better support business.

- It appeared that considerable development would take place in west Cumbria in the short term. Did the Strategic Housing Plan look at how housing could best be developed?

Mr Haywood stated that Carlisle had undertaken a very good piece of work to explain how housing growth in Carlisle would contribute to growth. That work was now replicated across Cumbria, and the infrastructure graphic represented a very compelling case. He added that Cumbria LEP recognised Carlisle's massive potential contribution. That was attractive since, although employed in the west, people may choose to live elsewhere.

RESOLVED – That the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- (1) welcomed the extremely interesting and informative presentation provided by Mr Haywood.
- (2) valued the work being undertaken by the Cumbria LEP and looked forward to receiving updates on progress at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11.20 am and reconvened at 11.32 am

EEOSP.76/15 BUDGET 2016/17

(a) Budget Overview

The Director of Resources gave an overview of the budget to the Panel to assist Members in their consideration of the Budget 2016/17.

(b) Budget Update – Revenue Estimates 2016/17 to 2020/21

The Director of Resources submitted report RD.40/15 providing a summary of the Council's revised revenue base estimates for 2015/16, together with base estimates for 2016/17 and forecasts up to 2020/21 for illustrative purposes. The base estimates had been prepared in accordance with the guiding principles for the formulation of the budget over the next five year planning period as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Charging Policy; Capital Strategy; and Asset Management Plan approved by Council on 8 September 2015.

The Executive had, on 16 November 2015 (EX.121/15), considered the report and forwarded it to Overview and Scrutiny Panels for consideration as part of the 2016/17 budget process.

The report set out known revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan projections, although there were a number of significant factors affecting the budget that were currently unresolved. Details of those key issues, together with the resource assumptions were recorded at Section 4 of the report. An assessment of the Chancellor's budget would be required following the Autumn Statement.

Decisions would need to be taken to limit budget increases to unavoidable and high priority issues, together with maximising savings and efficiencies (and probable use of reserves) to enable a balanced budget position to be recommended to Council in February 2016.

The Director of Resources explained that, in light of the current position in the MTFP, there were some potential new spending pressures which needed to be considered. Those were detailed at Appendix D to the report.

Turning to the issue of savings and additional income proposals, he added that the current MTFP included a savings requirement to be found by 2018/19 of £3.475 million. Further savings / additional income had been identified in the budget process for 2016/17, details of which were set out at Section 6 of the report.

Also summarised were the movements in base budgets; the updated MTFP projections; the outstanding key issues; the projected impact on revenue balances; together with a summary of the financial outlook and budget discipline 2016/17 to 2020/21.

The following new revenue spending pressures and reduced income projections; fell within the area of responsibility of the Panel:

Festive Lights

A proposed transformational saving of £29,000 to be made through sponsorship

Re-Thinking Waste

A proposed transformational saving of £400,000

Proposals for Transformation Savings

During their consideration of the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Referring to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, a Member sought clarification of the implications for apprenticeships and affordable housing.

The Director of Resources stated that the apprenticeship levy would come into effect in April 2017 at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill. Greater detail was required before firm advice on the implications for the City Council could be given.

On the latter point, the Director of Economic Development said that Officers were in the course of analysing the matter since there was a clear need to understand how it would work in the Carlisle district.

- How would the proposed saving of £29,000 (Festive Lights) be achieved; would 100% of the saving be made through sponsorship?

The Director of Local Environment replied that the revenue funding referred to was no longer within the budget, and it was hoped that in future new income could be brought in. The City Centre Management Team were developing a more commercial approach to achieve this, for example, this year vehicles were in the City Centre which had brought in new income.

The Director further explained the contractual arrangement which had been in place over the past three years to deliver the Festive Lights. A City Centre reserve fund of £42,000 was set aside which could be called upon should the need arise. Accordingly she felt confident that the Festive Lights would continue to be delivered moving forward.

The Director of Resources added that if additional income was forthcoming that could be ring fenced towards the Festive Lights.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder said that she would like to see the Christmas Lights switch on taking place on the first late night shopping evening (Thursday) since that may prove to be of greater benefit to businesses within the City Centre.

- Income from activities in the City Centre would go towards funding the Festive Lights, but there was a need to raise £24,000. Was that not effectively imposing a charge for the City Centre?

The Director of Local Environment reiterated that Officers were actively working to promote the City Centre. The income target had been achieved in the past and would again this year. Any surplus would be used wisely, one call on that being the Festive Lights.

- A Member sought a more detailed explanation on the proposed Voluntary Redundancy / Vacancy Management transformational savings.

The Director of Resources referred Members to Appendix C. He explained that, as Members would be aware, the savings proposals supported the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £1.3 m from staffing savings via vacancy management and voluntary redundancy. That equated to 45 staff.

The VR / ER initiative was ongoing; the final date for applications being 30 November 2015.

- Clearly certain posts could not be deleted from the staffing structure. Had staff been made aware?

The Director of Resources replied that aspect would be addressed during the next part of the process.

- Had the proposed savings of £400k (Rethinking Waste) been addressed?

The Director of Local Environment reminded Members that the Rethinking Waste Business Case had already been considered by the Panel. The direction of travel was per her previous update and she had nothing further to add at this time.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report RD.40/15 be noted.

(2) That the observations of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as set out above, be conveyed to the Executive.

(c) Summary of Charges Review

Chief Executive's Team and Deputy Chief Executive's Team

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted report PC.21/15 setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2016/17 relating to those services falling within the responsibility of the Chief Executive's Team and the Deputy Chief Executive's Team.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the proposed charges which included Organisational Development; the use of Event Assets by external organisations; Promotion and Marketing; and the use of the Old Fire Station which was a key priority and a major project for the City Council throughout 2014/15 and 2015/16. Details of the forecast levels of income for 2016/17 based upon the charging structure were also provided within the report.

Section 5.7 recorded that project work was ongoing in relation to a number of assets. At their meeting on 16 November 2015 the Executive was asked to delegate the setting of those charges to the Deputy Chief Executive.

The charges outlined in the report would raise income in line with the Business Plan for the Old Fire Station and the charges for Council event assets, advertising and sponsorship would raise income in line with the MTFP to offset the cost of the Council hosting events. The acceptance of the charges highlighted in the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £91,800 against the MTFP target of £91,800.

The Executive had considered the matter on 16 November 2015 (EX.122/15 referred) and decided:

That the Executive:

1. Agreed for consultation the charges as set out in Report PC.21/15 and relevant Appendices with effect from 1 April 2016, and noted the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.
2. Where project work was ongoing the Executive granted delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive for the setting of those charges.

The following areas fell within the responsibility of the Panel:

Event Assets

A number of assets were available to organisations for use in events. In the case of community events, it was proposed that the charges could be reduced and the value of the charges would be considered as additional support in kind for the event.

Promotion and Marketing

The City Council had a number of assets that could be used for promotion and marketing, and may be used as part of a value in kind arrangement for an event partner. A number of other assets were being developed through project work. It was anticipated that those charges would generate income in line with the MTFP target for 2016/17 (£20,000), which income would help offset the costs of supporting events.

Summary of Income

The 2016/17 forecast levels of income based upon the charging structure were outlined in the report.

During their scrutiny of the report Members posed the following questions:

- Referring to the Old Fire Station - Table 4.1: Room Hire – The Engine Room (evening rate), a Member sought clarification of the proposed charge reduction.

The Deputy Chief Executive pointed out that there was a requirement to delegate certain of the charges, as detailed within the report. He undertook to look into the above question and respond to Members.

- Following the liquidation of the original supplier and sub-contractor, the only outstanding item was installation of the lift at the Old Fire Station. Was that issue ongoing and what steps were being put in place to monitor progress?

In response the Deputy Chief Executive informed Members that the Arts Centre Project Board met on a six/eight weekly cycle, monitoring aspects including income, usage and patronage. He anticipated that the matter would shortly be resolved.

The Director of Resources added that, should any problems arise, details thereof would be included within the quarterly monitoring reports submitted to the Panel.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report PC.21/15 be noted.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to clarify the proposed reduction in charges for evening bookings of The Engine Room.

(3) That the comments of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as detailed above, be conveyed to the Executive.

Local Environment

The Director of Local Environment submitted report LE.30/15 setting out the proposed fees and charges relative to those services falling within the responsibility of the Local Environment Directorate.

Details of the proposed charges in respect of City Centre usage by external organisations, Car Parking, Allotments, Sports Pitches, Bereavement Services, Environmental Health, Waste Services and MOT charges were provided.

The Executive considered the matter on 16 November 2015 (EX.124/15 referred) and:

1. Agreed for consultation the charges as set out in Report LE.30/15 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2016; noting the impact of those charges on income generation, as detailed within the report.
2. Delegated authority to the Director of Local Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Director of Resources, the agreement of discounts on the saver permits within agreed limitations.

The following areas fell within the responsibility of the Panel:

City Centre Events Charges

Section 3 set out proposals to amend / increase City Centre Events charges, including the proposed introduction of charges for the installation and inspection of banners at £50 per banner; a charge of £1,000 per day for large events that occupied all available space in the City Centre; and a new charge of £10 per day per person to manage and monitor Face 2 Face Charity groups.

Car Parking

By way of background, Members were reminded that in March 2015 a new pay and display tariff, saver permit charges and charging structure was introduced using data from the car park model supplied by an external consultant. At the same time the transfer of the on street parking enforcement service back to Cumbria County Council drastically reduced the size of the car park team and led to the off street parking service being delivered in a very focussed way.

The more commercial approach to the management of the car parks, including the revised charging structure and marketing campaign takes time to take effect and had an unpredictable impact on income levels and car park usage. Therefore it would require a full year's worth of data from the car parks to enable a complete analysis to determine the impact of the changes. So far the data was showing no improvement in income overall although some areas, such as saver permits, were showing an increase.

The report provided an overview of pay by phone usage. In terms of the proposed charging structure for 2016/17 it further recorded that the long term vision for each car park was to be able to adapt to the changing market and potentially change tariffs to optimise income depending on prevailing market conditions, whilst helping to support the local residents, businesses and visitors to the City.

Attention was further drawn to Section 3.4 of the report which set out pay and display charges, together with details of:

- Proposed amendments to the car parking charges for 2016/17 (including reductions in charges; the addition of an extra tariff band into Town Dyke Orchard car park to make the facility more attractive to customers and a £1 charge for overnight parking in selected car parks);
- The proposal to remove existing car parking categories and market each car park individually;
- Proposed revisions in relation to Saver Parking Permits; Cecil Street, Town Dyke Orchard, Upper Viaduct and Lower Viaduct car parks, together with the implications thereof;
- A proposal to limit the free three hour parking designated blue badge bays only to promote fairness to all car park users, whilst still considering the needs of Blue Badge holders

Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces

Section 4.1 recorded proposed allotment charges, including a proposal to increase the qualifying age (from 60 to 65 years in line with state pension age) for discount on allotment rental, but not the water supply charge; and to remove the age related discounts.

Talkin Tarn Car Park

The new charging structure for Talkin Tarn, implemented in 2013/14, had increased income. In order to maintain performance and avoid deterring visitors to the Tarn it was proposed that there be no change to the £1 charge for parking for up to one hour. However, stays over 1 hour or for larger vehicles should be increased by 10% as shown in Table 10. No change was proposed for the Talkin Tarn Membership which should remain at £52.00 per year.

The Business Plan for Talkin Tarn sought to generate income wherever it was feasible and safe to do so. Other charges currently applied at Talkin Tarn were as outlined at Table 11. Charges had been increased in line with the MTFP requirement, other than for fishing permits and swimming registration.

Environmental Health

The charges within the Environmental Health function were diverse and in some instances the limits were fixed by legislation. The proposed charges were set out in Appendix B. Most discretionary charges had risen by 3.8 % to deliver both the MTFP target and a small additional increase to recover the Council's true costs in providing the services.

Waste Services and Street Cleaning

Proposals included:

- for bulky waste collection the number of items remain at three, but the fee be increased from £18 to £20 (that was substantially cheaper than many other authorities);
- to encourage waste minimisation the charge for a 140 litre refuse bin should remain at £20 and, following a successful trial, box hats would remain free of charge;
- the charge for a 240 litre refuse or garden waste bin should increase to £37;
- an option to collect the large 160 litre replacement gull sacks for half price, rather than having them delivered. To act as an incentive for waste minimisation and to encourage recycling, it was further proposed to reduce the charge for the smaller 90 litre gull sack to 50% the price of the large sack (delivered) and free if collected;
- the developer charge for new and replacement Euro Bins, introduced for 2013/14, would increase to £310

Summary of Income

The charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £2,666,800 against the MTFP target of £2,681,800. That represented a shortfall of £15,000 against the MTFP target.

The undernoted comments and questions were raised by Members during their consideration of the report:

- A Member considered that the proposal to increase the charge for the Farmers' Market stalls by 3.3% to £15.50 per day would have a negative effect.

In response, the Director of Local Environment explained the methodology adopted in relation to the proposed charges for 2016/17. The increase of 50p was the minimum amount and she did not believe it to be significant.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder spoke in support of the Director's comments. She emphasised that the Farmers' Market was always welcome in Carlisle and that the proposed increase was reasonable.

- Referring to pay by phone usage, a Member noted that in July / August usage had increased, but gross income was variable and had decreased. That was a concern.

The Director of Local Environment replied that charging levels had been reduced last year and the reduction in income was therefore anticipated. However, the new charging structure developed greater opportunity for vibrancy in the City Centre.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Holder added that the approach adopted aimed towards greater flexibility in order that the authority may respond to market pressures.

- A Member sought clarification of the reasons for the £15,000 loss of income on Cecil Street car park (Section 3.4.11 referred) and how that money may be clawed back.

The Director of Local Environment explained that the Cecil Street car park was managed under contract from Cumbria County Council. The City Council recovered the management costs and charged 10% of the income achieved. Clearly it was not possible to impose a charge if there was no income. The situation was temporary and Officers were in discussions with the County Council on the matter.

- Section 3.2 (Table 1) recorded a proposed increase for small children's ride from £55 per ride per day to £65 per ride per day. Was any documented evidence available to demonstrate the need for the proposed increase?

In response, the Director of Local Environment said that the inspection regime for small rides was more intensive and therefore more expensive. The proposal referred to was designed to adequately recover said costs.

- The report set out some major changes, including the proposed introduction of a £1 charge for overnight parking in selected car parks. Members had, in the past, devoted much time and effort towards developing the night-time economy. The impact of the proposal at the Sands Centre car park for example was of concern. How would the proposals work in practice; could the machines in the car parks be adapted; and might it simply mean that people would park on single yellow lines causing obstructions?

The Director of Local Environment indicated that increased wear and tear had been observed in certain car parks, and the proposed £1 charge (applicable between 6 pm and 8.30am the following day) would cover the additional maintenance required.

Another Member commented upon the need to strike a balance between the need to increase charges / cost of enforcement and the impact thereof on other priorities of the Council (e.g. cultural, healthy city).

- A Member was unhappy with the proposed change in policy for blue badge holders, expressing concern that people may park on yellow lines as opposed to parking safely in a car park.

Another Member questioned whether the proposed increase was worth the negative publicity.

The Director of Local Environment was aware that the proposal may be somewhat contentious. She referenced Table 5 which detailed that the total number of disabled bays was 33; there were 25 designated spaces throughout the city centre; unlimited parking in disc zones; and up to 3 hours on double yellow lines. That provision was considered to be adequate.

On the latter point, the Director said the issue was one of fairly balancing needs of disabled users and of other users of car parks.

- A Member disagreed with the proposed increases in relation to Talkin Tarn car park, expressing the belief that the Council had lost money as a result. He further questioned whether the money raised at Talkin Tarn was ring-fenced for Talkin Tarn in line with the policy.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder stated that the capital cost of improving the car park at Talkin Tarn was significant. The proposed increase in charges was reflective of the reality of the situation.

On the latter point, the Director of Local Environment advised that the revenue position was as set out within the Talkin Tarn Business Plan which had gone through the democratic process last year.

Another Member referenced the work and recommendations of the Talkin Tarn Task and Finish Group. He considered that, although the offer at Talkin Tarn constituted a good deal, people simply did not wish to pay for parking.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder added that the Executive had taken the recommendations of the Talkin Tarn Task and Finish Group (Report OS.12/13) very seriously. She emphasised that the people who looked after the Tarn did an excellent job and, following marketing, the Tarn had won an award for best attraction. The need for maintenance must be remembered.

- Section 3.4.17 recorded that in order to enable the Car Park Manager to be more responsive to customer needs and the changing market it was proposed that the Director of Local Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Director of Resources be granted delegated authority to agree discounts on permit prices within agreed limitations. What criteria would be adopted in that regard?

The Director of Local Environment advised that the criteria would be developed in agreement with the Portfolio Holder and Director of Resources.

- The inclusion of an additional column setting out the projected income figures for 2016/17 would have been helpful (Table 14 - summary of income referred).

The Director of Local Environment replied that Officers were working extremely hard to identify realistic income targets so that there was not a gap between reality and the figures contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan. She further summarised the methodology adopted in relation to car parking, drawing attention to the Car Park Performance Against Model Projection at Appendix A. Officers wished to adopt a more commercial approach, including a flexible offer which would in turn maximise income.

The Director of Resources added that, overall, the above represented a good news story.

- A Member pointed out that car parking machines did not give change which was, in her view, a fundamental flaw.

The Director of Local Environment was happy to explain the technological aspects out with the meeting. Alternatives to cash, such as pay by phone, were available.

- The approach adopted by certain car park attendants was over zealous. Had the law in relation to car parking been changed to enable a person to overstay by 10 minutes as announced by Mr Pickles?

The Director of Local Environment undertook to investigate that aspect and respond to Members. A high level of non-compliance had been discovered in relation to off-street parking as a result of which more tickets were being issued. It should be noted, however, that the Council did adopt a helpful approach, in addition to which an appeal procedure was in place.

The Deputy Leader, and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder took the view that she was entering into a contract when using car parks. The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder referenced a recent Appeal Court judgement on the matter.

- A Member sought clarification of the reasoning behind the proposal for collection of replacement gull sacks (Section 7.7 referred) and questioned why additional bins were not available.

In terms of replacement gull sacks, the Director of Local Environment replied that the issue was not restricted to the unit price; the authority had other costs to recover. The rounds were full and it was not therefore possible to undertake collection of any additional green waste bins either at new properties or at properties which were already on the round. That formed part of the Rethinking Waste project.

RESOLVED – (1) That report LE.30/15 be noted.

(2) That the Director of Local Environment clarify the Law in relation to parking and respond to Members.

(3) That the observations of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as set out above, be conveyed to the Executive.

Economic Development

The Director of Economic Development submitted report ED.38/15 setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate. The proposed charges related to Economic Development and Tourism; Planning Services; Housing; and Hostel Services.

The Executive had, on 16 November 2015 (EX.125/15), agreed for consultation the charges, as set out in the relevant Appendices to Report ED.38/15, with effect from 1 April 2016; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.

The following areas fell within the responsibility of the Panel:

Tourist Information Centre and Assembly Room

Although it was considered that there was little scope for increasing the commission charges as they were usually set by the company, increasing the sales of tickets through promotion and looking for new ticket agency opportunities could increase income.

Over the last few years income streams from other activities such as accommodation booking and retail sales had decreased, mainly due to decreasing visitor numbers. The Accommodation Booking system had been revised in the last year, including the possibility of becoming a Booking.com Agent so that the Tourist Information Centre would receive 10% on every booking made. A marketing plan had been created to help generate awareness and footfall into the Old Town Hall. Other opportunities were also being explored.

Charges for the hire of the Assembly Room were currently set at £67 in line with other venues around the City Centre. An increase of 3% for 2016/17 was proposed. Along with the TIC a marketing plan had been created for the Assembly Room, the aim of which was to increase usage.

Enterprise Centre

Not included within the report.

Planning Services

The planning fees were last increased in 2013/14 and, although there were attempts to have localised fee setting, no further increases or changes to the national system were proposed at the moment.

Building Control

Fees were now kept under regular review by the Building Control Service and were set in line with other Cumbrian authorities.

Summary of Income

Acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report, with the exception of Building Control which was self-financing, would result in an anticipated level of income of £1,288,300 against the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £1,284,400.

The undernoted comments and questions were raised by Members during their consideration of the report:

- Why was there no reference within the report to the Enterprise Centre?

The Director of Economic Development replied that no changes were proposed in relation to the Enterprise Centre which was why it was not referenced in her report.

- Members requested an update on progress with the Marketing Plan for the Old Town Hall, together with feedback on take up of the Assembly Room.

In response, the Director of Economic Development said that a draft Marketing Plan was currently being developed. There had been a great deal of interest and positive comments in relation to the Assembly Room. Officers wished to monitor performance and report back over the coming twelve month period.

- Were the proposed Development Control charges designed merely to cover the cost of the service?

The Director of Economic Development advised that the income received covered the costs of running the service, not the Officer time which was an issue particularly with regard to larger applications. The position was closely monitored.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder added that planning fees were set nationally. It should also be noted that the City Council did not charge for pre-application discussions whereas other local authorities imposed a charge.

The Chairman said that the Panel was looking forward to the City Centre Development Framework.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report ED.38/15 be noted.

(2) That the observations of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as outlined above, be conveyed to the Executive.

(d) Revised Capital Programme 2015/16 and Provisional Capital Programme 2015/16 to 2020/21

The Director of Resources submitted report RD.41/15 detailing the revised Capital Programme for 2015/16, together with the proposed method of financing. The report summarised the proposed programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21 in the light of the new capital proposals identified, and summarised the estimated capital resources available to fund the programme.

The Director drew attention to Section 4 which provided details of the following current commitments which fell within the remit of the Panel:

- the provision of a cycleway from Crindledyke which was funded from Section 106 funds in line with the development agreement; and
- works which were funded from the LEP to improve infrastructure around Durrhill Industrial Estate

He emphasised that any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved.

Also highlighted for Members were the estimated resources available to finance the capital programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21 based on the announcements by Government in the spending review. A summary of the estimated resources compared to the proposed programme year on year was also provided.

The Executive had considered the matter on 16 November 2015 (EX.127/15) and:

1. Noted the revised capital programme and relevant financing for 2015/16 as set out in Appendices A and B of Report RD.41/15;
2. Had given initial consideration and views on the proposed capital spending for 2016/17 to 2020/21 contained in the Report in the light of the estimated available resources;

3. Noted that any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved.

In response to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to investigate the total cost of the Crindledyke cycleway and report back to Members.

RESOLVED – (1) That Report RD.41/15 be noted.

(2) That, following investigation, the Director of Resources report back to Members with details of the cost of the Crindledyke cycleway.

EEOSP.77/15 PUBLIC REALM UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the Strategic Property Services Manager to the meeting.

The Strategic Property Manager began by summarising the background to the Public Realm programme, reminding Members that he had last attended the Panel meeting on 23 April 2015.

The Strategic Property Manager then gave a presentation which included good examples of public realm; a review of options to move elements of the project forward; finalisation of the design of information hubs, maps and information graphics; and a number of other projects.

[A copy of the presentation was included within the Agenda Document Pack for the meeting]

The undernoted questions / observations were raised in discussion:

- Speaking as a cyclist, a Member commented upon the importance of city centre maps for visitors, particularly detailing exit routes. Had consideration been given to updating such signage / maintenance should it be the subject of vandalism?

In response, the Strategic Property Manager explained that the next phase of the project would be to look at the inclusion of trail information to assist people in exiting the City. A great deal of work had been undertaken around the potential to maintain and update maps, which work could be done cost effectively.

- Would the final design of the maps be more colourful?

The Strategic Property Manager confirmed that to be the case, adding that consideration was being given to grid referencing with a view to highlighting attractions.

- What proportion of existing signage was salvageable?

The Director of Economic Development advised that the project would be rolled out on a phased process. Discussions were ongoing with County Council colleagues which was very positive.

The Strategic Property Manager added that Officers were working towards delivery of some signage by the end of the current financial year.

- Would Court Square benefit from the recent announcement regarding investment in Carlisle Station?

In response, the Director of Economic Development confirmed that consideration was being given to the manner by which Court Square could be improved. That was tied up with the LEP.

RESOLVED – That the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel thanked the Strategic Property Services Manager for his interesting and informative presentation; and looked forward to being updated further on the Public Realm programme at a future meeting.

EEOSP.78/15 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

During consideration of the above item of business, it was noted that the meeting had been in progress for 3 hours. It was moved by the Chairman and:

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 3 hours.

EEOSP.79/15 2ND QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted report PC.23/15 updating the Panel on the Council's service standards which helped measure performance, together with the key actions contained within the Carlisle Plan 2013-16. It was anticipated that the revised priorities contained within the Carlisle Plan 2015-18 would be reported from the 3rd quarter onwards following full Council in November 2015.

Details of each service standard were set out in the table at Section 1. The table illustrated the cumulative year to date figure, a month-by-month breakdown of performance and, where possible, an actual service standard baseline that had been established either locally or nationally.

The updates against the actions in the Carlisle Plan followed on from the service standard information in Section 2.

Referring to Dog Fouling Street Counts (page 55 of the Document Pack), a Member questioned why there was no reference to the rural area.

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that consideration should be given to areas where there was a concern regarding dog fouling.

The Policy and Performance Officer undertook to feed that concern back to the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel had considered the performance of the City Council, presented in Report PC.23/15, with a view to seeking continuous improvement in how the Council delivered its priorities.

(2) That the Policy and Performance Officer be requested to raise the issue of Dog Fouling Street Counts in the rural area with the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team.

EEOSP.80/15 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.25/15 providing an overview of matters relative to the work of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Notice of Executive Key Decisions, published on 13 November 2015, included the 2016/17 Budget Process (KD.33/15) which matter was included on the agenda today.

Members did not raise any questions or comments on the items contained within the Notice of Key Decisions.

The Panel's Work Programme was attached to the report and Members were asked note and/or amend the Programme as they saw fit.

The Chairman reported upon the receipt of a Petition entitled "Clean Up Our Streets", which matter would be submitted to the Panel at their meeting on 21 January 2016.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer further advised that the Executive had, on 16 November 2015, responded to the recommendations of the Business Support Task and Finish Group in the following terms (EX.133/15 referred):

Recommendation 1: Audit of Networks

"An audit of the business support and business start-up networks, both formal and informal, should be undertaken.

This audit will provide current content for a refresh of the business support pages on the new Carlisle.gov.uk website and help to ensure that the Council plays a role in signposting those looking for support. The monitoring of the performance of these pages will further aid the understanding of the need for business support in Carlisle."

The City Council was extremely knowledgeable about the business support available in the District and, although no longer required to provide that support directly, the authority did work closely with providers.

Work was also ongoing via the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Ambassadors Programme, and the Portfolio Holder gave an assurance that the close working relationship and assistance alluded to would continue.

Recommendation 2: Rebranding the Enterprise Centre

"The Enterprise Centre is renamed and rebranded to represent its current use as managed workspace.

The centre is no longer the epicentre of business support in Carlisle; it does however continue to offer a range of affordable workshops, studio and office units in a City Centre location. To continue to present the space as an Enterprise Centre risks ongoing confusion about its role in the business support offer available in Carlisle."

As reported at the Panel meeting, the review of the Enterprise Centre currently being undertaken would look at all aspects of the Centre's operation. Overview and Scrutiny would be kept informed as regards the proposed outcomes of that work.

Recommendation 3(a)(b): Business Support and Devolution

“(a) The group seek reassurance that any new deal that includes business support will be influenced by and therefore responsive to Carlisle's needs.

(b) The group seek reassurance that any new deal that includes business support will be structured in such a way to enable local scrutiny.”

Any new deal involving business support was likely to be Government led, and would be influenced by and responsive to Carlisle's needs. Although out with their control, the Executive would endeavour to ensure that local scrutiny took place.

Recommendation 4: Communications and Marketing Strategy for Business Support

“A communications and marketing strategy should be implemented to support all the recommendations adopted. This strategy needs to include key players such as the Job Centre, BIC, Growth Hub and banks.”

Responsibility lay with the LEP. The Executive would do their best to encourage the LEP to communicate with and involve key players. Every effort would be made to retain the Council's good working relationship with local business and to share with said parties anything likely to be advantageous to them.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview Report (OS.25/15) incorporating the Work Programme and Notice of Executive Key Decision items relevant to this Panel be noted.

(2) That the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel would monitor progress on the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the Business Support Task and Finish Group.

(The meeting ended at 1.03 pm)