

## **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**THURSDAY 28 MARCH 2013 AT 10.00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Luckley (Chairman) Councillors Bowditch (as substitute for Councillor Miss Sherriff), Earp, Mrs Prest, Scarborough, Mrs Stevenson, Mrs Vasey and Whalen (as substitute for Councillor Mrs Bradley)

**ALSO**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Riddle – Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder  
Mr R Auld – Chairman of Carlisle Parish Councils Association  
Ms C Rankin – Carlisle Parish Councils Association  
Mr J Barker - Secretary of the Carlisle and Rural Tenants' Federation  
Mr S Carter – Yewdale Community Centre Manager  
Ms C Hannah – Denton Holme Community Centre Manager  
Councillor T Allison, Dalston Ward Councillor – Observer  
Councillor B Craig, Dalston Ward Councillor - Observer

**OFFICERS:** Director of Community Engagement  
DFG Coordinator – Cumbria  
Wellbeing Manager  
Scrutiny Officer

### **COSP.21/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Bradley and Miss Sherriff.

### **COSP.22/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Earp declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.4 – Parish Charter. The interest related to the fact that he was a Parish Councillor.

Councillor Whalen declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.4 – Parish Charter. The interest related to the fact that he was a Member of Cumbria County Council.

Councillor Mrs Luckley declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.2 – Questions from Members of the Public. The interest related to the fact that she was a City Council representative on the Riverside Carlisle Board.

Councillor Scarborough declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.5(b) – Update – Support to Community Centres. The interest related to the fact that he was a City Council representative on Botcherby Community Centre Management Committee.

Councillor Mrs Stevenson declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.5(b) – Update – Support to Community

Centres. The interest related to the fact that she was a City Council representative on Morton Community Centre Management Committee.

Councillor Bowditch declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.5(b) – Update – Support to Community Centres. The interest related to the fact that he was a City Council representative on Yewdale Community Centre Management Committee.

Councillor Mrs Vasey declared a registrable interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item A.5(b) – Update – Support to Community Centres. The interest related to the fact that she was a City Council representative on Belah Community Centre Management Committee.

### **COSP.23/13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Panel asked that the following items be corrected in the minutes for the meeting held on 14 February 2013:

Councillor Scarborough had submitted apologies at the meeting not Councillor McDevitt That COSP.10/13 be amended from 'the' to 'a' Council representative on Riverside Carlisle.  
That one of the Communities Housing and Health Manager be removed from the officers list.

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2013 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

2) That, subject to the amendments above, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2013 be noted.

### **COSP.24/13 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

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

### **COSP.25/13 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

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

#### Riverside Carlisle

Pursuant to Procedure Rule 10.1, the Director of Governance reported the receipt of the following questions to the Chairman which had been submitted on notice by Mr Barker, Secretary of the Carlisle and Rural Tenants' Federation:

#### Question 1

"The serious social housing shortage in the rural areas of Carlisle was highlighted at the Panel meeting on February 14 2013 when Riverside representatives were asked how the shortage of affordable accommodation is being tackled bearing in mind that one in three city residents are from the rural area. Members of the Panel were informed that there are no current or planned rural developments by Riverside. How will Members of the Panel ensure that this shortage of affordable social housing is given due consideration by Riverside Carlisle when they are developing their capital schemes?"

### Question 2

"Members of the Panel were informed how Riverside Carlisle are supporting their tenants during the Welfare Reform changes. Are Members of the Panel assured that that all Riverside tenants will receive equal support and assistance regardless of their locality or membership of tenants association and how do the Panel intend to further scrutinise this issue?"

The Chairman answered Mr Barker's questions as follows:

### Question 1

"The Panel will continue to invite Riverside Carlisle to its meetings on a 6 monthly basis and will continue to scrutinise their development plan including the consideration of rural developments. Members would like to point out that Riverside is not the only social housing provider in the District and there are several other Housing Associations who will have their own development plan and could also help address any shortage of rural social housing."

### Question 2

"The Panel have concerns about the impact of welfare reform on all of those effected in the Carlisle district. We will continue to look at the implications of the changes which will include requests for information from Riverside Carlisle to ensure that the best possible support is being given to all those tenants who are affected"

The Chairman gave Mr Barker the opportunity to ask a supplementary question.

Mr Barker asked the following supplementary question:

"The question put to the Panel requested assurance that Riverside Tenants would receive equal support and assistance, did the Chairman feel that her response addressed the Tenants Federation's concerns?"

The Chairman responded that she did feel the response addressed the concerns and the Panel had taken careful note of what the Tenants Federation had said and what Riverside Carlisle Had said. She added that the Panel, like many others, were very concerned about the effect of the welfare reform.

The Chairman thanked Mr Barker for his questions.

## **COSP.26/13    LOCALITY WORKING**

The Chairman of Carlisle Parish Councils Association (CPCA) presented a report on Locality Working and the progress made in the Carlisle District.

He reported that Locality Working was about people and the Government working together to make a better life. It involved more people influencing decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling local problems. He then gave an overview of how Parish Councils could be involved and the benefits and concerns regarding Locality Working.

The Chairman of CPCA reported that the CPCA had felt that there was merit in exploring Locality Working and, through consultation, two clear messages had become apparent; the process should be led from the bottom up and not imposed from the Principal Authorities (an approach which was shared by the City Council) and that the process

should be issue based rather than geographical clusters. The approach had led to significant benefits of Parishes working together on single issue projects. However, the long term benefits of the approach were questionable as the benefits which accrued were valuable but not particularly sustainable.

The CPCA therefore took the decision in 2012 to re-look at the benefits and options around geographically based Locality Working and a summary of the experiences from other districts in Cumbria had been included in the report.

Another important development in Carlisle District had been the review of the operation of the Neighbourhood Forums undertaken by Cumbria County Council. The review led to a different approach in terms of community engagement through the County Council and the formation of grant panels to consider community grant applications. At the same time the geographical areas covered by Neighbourhood Forums had been reviewed to reflect changes in County Council electoral divisions. The review led to the formation of three geographical areas in Carlisle District for the purposes of community grants.

The Chairman of the CPCA gave an overview of examples of the possible projects which could arise from Locality Working.

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

- A Member appreciated the work that had been undertaken by the CPCA regarding Locality Working and understood that smaller Parishes had little opportunity to put their views forward. He was, however, concerned that the proposed division of the Parishes into three areas was not appropriate and would result in Parishes working together which did not share the same issues or goals.

The Chairman of the CPCA explained that the map had originally been produced by Cumbria County Council as part of their review of Neighbourhood Working. The map had been included in the report to encourage discussion and allow Parishes to raise their own concerns or suggestions. He reminded the Panel that the proposals were not prescriptive and the division was not the final model.

- How long was the consultation period?

The Chairman of the CPCA informed the Panel that the document was ready to be consulted on and the consultation period would be six weeks. He felt that it was important not to rush the proposals as the CPCA did not want to impose Locality Working on Parishes, he wanted to take the proposals forward slowly and carefully.

A Member highlighted that a number of smaller Parishes did not meet frequently and it was vital that City Councillors who attended Parish meetings were well informed.

The Chairman of the CPCA agreed that work would be undertaken to look at the timetabling of Parish meetings and ensure that the consultation period allowed for their input.

- The report stated that the long term benefits of issue based working has to be questioned, who would do this?

The Chairman of the CPCA responded that it would be up to the Parishes to question the efficiency of Locality Working to determine if they were receiving the benefits of the relationship. He reminded the Panel that Parish Councils were the first tier in Local Government and a number of Parishes did not appreciate the fact.

The Chairman of the CPCA outlined a number of successful projects and highlighted some funding that Copeland had achieved for new housing through Locality Working. He agreed to provide further information on the project to Members who requested it.

The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder added that the Copeland model worked particularly well because they were generously funded and she felt that Locality Working would require funding to be successful.

RESOLVED – That the report on Locality Working be welcomed.

### **COSP.27/13    PARISH CHARTER**

The Director of Community Engagement submitted report CD.21/13 presenting the Parish Charter for Carlisle and District, and its Formal Agreements, copies of which were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

He outlined the background to the matter reminding Members that the City Council and the Parishes had, in 2012, agreed a draft Charter which was consulted on. However, that document could not be formally agreed and was consequently revised to reflect both the comments from the Parishes and the need for further changes reflecting reorganisation within the City Council.

The revised Charter and its Formal Agreements had been agreed at the joint meeting between the City Council and representatives of the Parish Councils on 5 December 2012. They were then sent out for formal consultation which concluded on 20 February 2013.

The Director of Community Engagement informed the meeting that the Parishes had responded positively and no revisions had been made to the original agreed draft.

It had further been agreed that the Planning Agreement would remain in its current form, but would be subject to an ongoing review process due to the large number of significant changes in legislation and also locally (such as the agreement of a Local Plan), which would shortly be going out to consultation.

He added that a formal response to the comments made by the Parishes during the consultation period had been drafted and was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Chairman of the CPCA thanked officers for their involvement and work in the Charter. It had been a complex piece of work that included a lot of views from a number of people. The previous tri-partite Charter had been too long and had been fixed. The new Charter had a light touch with agreements which could be amended and updated. Cumbria County Council had not been included in the new Charter as a County wide Charter was being prepared.

The Executive had on 11 March 2013 (EX.23/13) considered the report and decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted and approved the Parish Charter and its Formal Agreements for sign off jointly with the Parish Councils on 8 April 2013.
2. Noted and approved the City Council response to Parishes, following the consultation period which ended on 20 February 2013.”

In considering the Parish Charter Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The Panel agreed that the planning agreement was a vital component in the Charter and felt strongly that they could not support the Charter until the planning agreement had been included and scrutinised.
- Why had Cumbria County Council not be included in the new Charter?

The Chairman of CPCA explained that the initial move towards the new Charter had begun with the previous administration when it had been agreed that the new Charter would be between the City Council and Parishes. He added that the planning agreement had taken longer than anticipated because it was complicated, the Charter did reflect the issues raised by the Parishes and they had been responded to positively by City Council officers.

A Member felt that the County Council should have been included in the process and he agreed that the Panel could not support the document until it was completed.

- The Panel asked that a proper evaluation of outcomes be carried out when the Charter was completed.

The Chairman of CPCA agreed that a proper evaluation would be carried out and the intention of the new Charter was for it to be a flexible ‘living’ document that could be renewed and refreshed regularly.

- How many formal replies had been received from Parishes?

The DFG Coordinator – Cumbria responded that the number of formal replies received had been low but the Charter had been to each parish and everyone had been supportive.

**RESOLVED** – The Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel feel that they cannot fully support the Parish Charter until the Planning Agreement had been included and scrutinised.

The Panel urge the Executive to take into consideration the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel when making their decision.

## **COSP.28/13    OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.07/13 which provided an overview of matters relating to the work of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and included the latest version of the work programme and Key Decisions of the Executive which related to the Panel.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that:

- The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 8 March 2013. The following issues fell within the remit of this Panel:

KD.045/12 – Parish Charter to be considered at this meeting

KD.04/13 – Food Law Enforcement Service Plan would be available for the Panel to consider at their meeting on 30 May 2013. The Panel agreed to take this item for information only.

KD.041/12 - Regulatory Reform Order had been removed from the April Notice and would be considered by the Executive and this Panel at a future date.

- There were no references from the Executive.
- The Scrutiny Annual Report had been drafted and was attached to the report. Members were asked to comment on the draft report before it was formally approved by the Scrutiny Chairs Group on 18 April 2013.

The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder stated that she relished the robustness of the Panel's questions.

- Councillor Mrs Luckley and Councillor Mrs Prest had attended a session on the community implications of welfare reform which had been run by the North West employers on 26 February 2013.

The Panel discussed possible items for the 2013/14 Panel's Work Programme including a workshop for all three Overview and Scrutiny Panels on Welfare Reform, the rise of hate and race incidents and local support for Council Tax.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key decisions relevant to this Panel be noted;

2) That Key Decisions:

KD.04/13 – Food Law Enforcement Service Plan would be received by the Panel information only.

KD.041/12 - Regulatory Reform Order had been removed from the April Notice and would be considered by the Executive and this Panel at a future date.

3) That the following items be included in the Panel's Work Programme for 2013/14:

- workshop for all three Overview and Scrutiny Panels on Welfare Reform
- the rise of hate and race incidents
- Local support for Council Tax

## **COSP.29/13 UPDATE – SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY CENTRES**

The Director of Community Engagement submitted report CD.27/13 providing an update on the actions taken in relation to the recommendations of the Community Centre Task Group.

The Director of Community Engagement reminded the Panel of the five recommendations and gave a brief update on each of the recommendations.

He reported that there had been a significant amount of attention given to Community Centres following the Task Groups recommendations. The Centres had been informed on numerous occasions that both the Wellbeing Manager and the Community Development Officer for Social Enterprise were both available to address any concerns. The Centres were also advised that they could access the Corporate training Programme but the take up had to date been extremely poor.

The Director of Community engagement hoped that the new Service Level Agreements would maximise the outreach benefits of the Centres, linking Council services with local communities. The Agreements would ensure every Centre knew its purpose, how it could meet its objectives and what it required in terms of staffing and resources to deliver its business plan. Business planning would be a key component on how Community Centres planned their future.

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

- A Member highlighted some issues and concerns that had been raised by a Community Centre Management Committee with regard to the new Service Level Agreements. Following some discussion it was agreed that the consideration of the Service Level Agreement did not come under the remit of the report and Members focused on the relationship between the City Council and the Community Centres.
- The Yewdale Community Centre Manager commented that initially the Community Centres had felt that they were being listened to and the discussions led to the new Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The Centres had understood that the SLAs would be created in partnership with the Centres and the Council and Issues arose when the Community Centres received a draft of the SLAs without going through a partnership process.

The Denton Holme Community Centre Manager agreed that the Centres had felt supported by the Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder but communication began to break down again following receipt of the draft SLAs.

The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder reminded the Panel that the relationship had to be two way. She had visited the Community Centres and so had officers. There had been a number of offers made to the Centres and she had been disappointed by the lack of responses. She felt that it would take some time to gain the confidence of the Managers and the Centre Managements Committees and felt that more work was needed in engaging the Management Committees.

- Why were Centre Managers not responding to the training on offer?

The Denton Holme Centre Manager explained that she had attended some training at the Civic Centre but had felt that it was Civic Centre based. She added that she had signed up for training in November and it had been cancelled and rescheduled four times, in the end she had to take her name from the training list.

The Yewdale Community Centre Manager agreed that the training was not Centre based and that he had managed to adapt the training for staff at the Community Centre but he understood that not all Managers would have the time or skills to do the same.



The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder highlighted the training which was aimed at the Centres to assist them in hosting and producing the documents that the Council was asking for the SLAs.

The Wellbeing Manager commented that the officers were receiving very little feedback and asked what it was that the Centres wanted from the Council.

The Yewdale Centre Manager reminded the Panel that relationships had been improving until the draft SLAs were produced without involving Centres in the process which resulted in them have no input.

RESOLVED – The Panel welcomed the update on the support to Community Centres and were disappointed that relationships between the City Council and the Community Centres were not progressing as anticipated.

### **COSP.30/13    CDRP PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

The Director of Community Engagement submitted the Carlisle and Eden Community Safety Partnership (CSP) draft Partnership Plan for 2013/14 (CD.20/13).

The Director of Community Engagement reminded the Panel of the Council's statutory obligations and reported that the draft Plan formed part of the City Councils Policy Framework and refreshed the existing Plan. The Plan had been developed by the CSP's Leadership Group with input from the City Council's Lead Officer and Portfolio Holder.

He added that the report presented the CSP's work programme for the coming year in the form of their Partnership Plan. The document represented a live work programme which developed throughout the year and could be influenced and shaped through the City Council's representation on the CSP's Leadership Group.

A Member commented that the CDRP had lost considerable funding as well as one full time equivalent post. How much funding did the CDRP receive and how was it used?

The Director of Community Engagement agreed that the funding had been reduced and informed the Panel that CDRP received £31,000. He agreed to give a more detailed response in writing on how the funding was used.

The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder highlighted the additional emphasis that had been placed on the 'Reduce harm caused by drugs' and 'Impact of Alcohol Misuse' key priorities. She also highlighted that Sexual Violence had been added to the Key Priorities.

RESOLVED – That the Carlisle and Eden CSP Partnership Plan 2013-14 Refresh be welcomed.

### **COSP.31/13    PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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

**COSP.32/13    COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TRANSFORMATION PROPOSALS**  
(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 3)

The Director of Community Engagement submitted private report CD.22/13 which outlined the proposed changes within the Community Engagement Directorate.

He reported that the document had been issued to staff for consultation and had been produced following proposals for changes from the first consultation which took place from 19 November 2012 to 4 January 2013.

The Director of Community Engagement reminded the Panel of the overall savings target for the Directorate and outlined where the proposed savings would be made and the proposed new structure for the Directorate.

In response to Members questions the Director of Community Engagement explained that the changes to the Strategic and Private Sector Housing Team would allow a rigorous programme of landlord monitoring and well supported accreditation scheme. The Team would be strengthened and there would be more emphasis on working with landlords to bring empty properties back into use.

The Panel were extremely concerned that the proposed changes would have a detrimental effect on the offer to young people. The Director of Community Engagement responded that had he felt that the offer for young people had not been as effective as it could have been and more work was needed especially regarding vulnerable young people. The Homeless Prevention and Accommodation team would prioritise this area and the Community and Families Development Officer would work with young people in care or in need.

Members asked for more information regarding the changes to the Customer Contact Centre and the Director of Community Engagement explained that proposed changes would allow staff to work more effectively in preparation for the increase in footfall due to the Welfare Reform.

The Director of Community Engagement agreed to clarify the proposed overall net reduction in posts in writing and provide a written note on the proposed Healthy City Week.

He explained that the Arts Development Officer did not depend on the new Carlisle Arts Centre. The post would link with Tullie House, schools and the tourism offer.

**RESOLVED** – That the effectiveness of the integration of the Wellbeing Team into the Community Engagement structure be reviewed in six months time.

(The meeting ended at 12.20pm)