

## **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 10.00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Luckley (Chairman) Councillors Mrs Bradley, Collier, Mrs Prest, Scarborough, Miss Sherriff, Mrs Stevenson, and Mrs Vasey.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Riddle – Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder

### **COSP.55/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

### **COSP.56/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **COSP.57/12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 19 July 2012 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

### **COSP.58/12 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

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

### **COSP.59/12 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.23/12 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 Forward Plan items which related to the Panel.

Mrs Edwards reported that:

- The Forward Plan of Executive Key Decisions, covering the period 1 September to 31 December 2012 had been published on 17 August 2012 and there had been two items in the Forward Plan within the remit of this Panel:

KD.029/12 – Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery Trust Business Plan 2013/14 – would be considered by the Panel on 22 November 2012 and Members of the

Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel were invited to attend the meeting to take part in the scrutiny of the Plan

KD.033/12 – Budget Process 2012/13 – Would be considered by the Panel on 22 November 2012.

The Panel also agreed to add the draft tenant Strategy and the Executive's savings proposals to their work programme to be considered at their meeting on 11 October 2012.

- The Executive had considered the response to the Panel's recommendation to lobby the Government for a change in legislation regarding lifetime homes at their meeting on 6 August 2012 (EX.098/12 refers). The Executive gave consideration to the reference and requested that a letter be sent to the Secretary of State lobbying for a change in legislation regarding lifetime homes.

Members suggested that before the letter referred to above was sent to the Secretary of State, Officers should consult with colleagues in Planning with regard to the wording of the letter in relation to the legislation regarding lifetime homes.

The Panel agreed the Terms of Reference of the Community Centre Task and Finish Group.

The Shared Revenues and Benefits Partnership Manager (Mr Bascombe) gave a brief update on the Localisation of Council Tax. Mr Bascombe advised that little further information had been received since the report to the Panel at an earlier meeting. Pilots were taking place in some areas in respect of some of the issues in the meantime. With regard to the universal benefit cap Mr Bascombe informed Members that some households had been identified that could see benefits affected significantly and Officers were writing to those households to advise them of that potential situation. It was anticipated that 37 households in Carlisle would be affected.

Mr Bascombe anticipated that further information and regulations would be received by late November/early December which would lead to a tight timescale for implementation.

A Member queried whether a computer system had been developed that would mitigate any delays in processing the information. Mr Bascombe explained that until the regulations had been received it would be difficult to develop software in relation to the Localisation of Council Tax.

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

2) That Forward Plan items:

KD.029/12 – Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery Trust Business Plan 2013/14 – would be considered by this Panel on 22 November 2012 and Members of the

Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be invited to attend to scrutinise the item.

KD.033/12 – Budget Process 2012/13 – would be considered by this Panel on 22 November 2012.

3) That Executive reference EX.098/12 be welcomed.

### **COSP.60/12 CORPORATE PLAN**

The Policy and Communications Officer (Mr Oliver) submitted report PPP.11/12 which detailed the development of the new Corporate Plan and the indicative timetable for the work. The report also introduced the Service Standards that would measure the Council's performance and customer satisfaction.

The report indicated that the 2010-2013 Corporate Plan was drawing to an end and work had begun on developing a new Corporate Plan and performance framework. The new Plan would set out the Council's vision for Carlisle and priorities for action. Each of the priorities would initially aim to be delivered by the end of March 2013. That would align the Plan with the budget year, and future actions that developed could fit into the budget planning process.

The new list of Service Standards reflected what the Council believed most affected its customers and on which the Council could be held to account. The Standards were based on timeliness, accuracy and appropriateness of the service provided in key areas.

The report advised that it was not the Council's intention to measure the Service Standards' performance solely against targets, but that performance would be measured on a monthly basis and the results would be displayed in the Civic Centre reception and on the Council's website.

In addition to the Service Standards and the measures that each Directorate would have in place, the Council was developing a set of principles for staff that would support them, guide behaviours and help them perform to the best level.

Members were asked to consider the Standards and refer any comments to the Scrutiny Chairs Group for their review of future Corporate Plan reports.

Mr Oliver advised that a survey would be developed on the website in relation to the key service areas. A press release would be issued that would advise residents of the survey and advise that those without access to the website could obtain a hard copy for completion.

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

- *Would names and addresses of those submitting comments on the survey be requested? If not the survey could be open to poor service reviews as people were more likely to submit poor comments if they were anonymous.*

Mr Oliver explained that the reason it had been decided to carry out the survey via the website was to save costs. Mr Oliver realised that anonymous surveys could attract extremes but he believed that the information, in conjunction with feedback from the Customer Contact Centre and corporate complaints would give an overall view.

The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that people who completed the survey were more likely to leave negative feedback. However, it was possible to obtain information regarding whether targets were being reached and discussions with staff in the Customer Contact Centre had led to the implementation of a system whereby reference numbers were issued to people making contact with the City Council. If an Officer failed to respond to the complaint or issue the person could contact the Customer Contact Centre and the relevant Officer could be identified by the reference number. The Portfolio Holder explained that if a complaint was made by a Councillor on behalf of a resident the Officer would be requested to contact the Councillor in order that they could then feedback the information to the resident.

- *What were the benefits of comparing the City Council service standard figures with those of other councils? The authorities identified within the report were not similar to the City Council and therefore the comparison was not "like with like".*

Mr Oliver explained that the authorities that had been chosen had been assessed as authorities whose performance was classified as excellent. However no account had been given to how much was spent to achieve those levels of performance. Mr Oliver suggested it may be more useful to compare the figures with those within the historical cities group. He advised that the matter would be looked at and those authorities included in the next report.

- *It may be more beneficial to use quartile figures rather than comparisons with other authorities. Was the Council required to make comparisons?*

Mr Oliver advised that the figures were contextual and that some of the figures were based on the previous National Indicator sets and that now the Council had set their own measures. Mr Oliver suggested that Members needed to be mindful that other authorities may have adjusted their measures following the abolition of National Indicators.

- *The figure in respect of processing new benefit claims in less than 30 days was 55%. Was that satisfactory and what was being done to improve that figure?*

The Portfolio Holder advised that it was not satisfactory and that Officers were working to improve the figure. A working group had been set up to look at the processing of new benefit claims across the partnership and a meeting would be held in October that would look at how the process could be improved.

Mr Bascombe advised that the Department for Work and Pensions was supportive of the process used by Carlisle and the partnership. The working group were focussing on measures that could be put in place to improve the figures. Mr Bascombe confirmed that the figure in the report was Carlisle only although the performance of the other authorities within the partnership did affect the outcome of that

measurement. The Director for Community Engagement explained that by March 2013 the same system would be in place across the three authorities and that would enable improved performance. The efficiencies would be more apparent when the IT systems were working properly across the authorities.

- *Would there be a financial penalty if a target was missed eg waste or recycling collections?*

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager (Mrs Edwards) advised that the question would be put to the Director of Local Environment at the meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 13 September 2012.

Mr Oliver advised that it was anticipated that Service Standards would evolve over the year and that some would be added and some removed.

RESOLVED – 1) That the comments and questions raised by the Panel would be referred to the meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Group.

2) That the Corporate Plan would next be submitted to the Panel at their meeting on 11 October 2012.

(The meeting ended at 10:45 am)