

## **Resources Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

### **Chairman's Report**

**Meeting held Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

The annual review of the City Council's significant partnerships was noted by the panel. The Council has eight significant partnerships, which include three shared service arrangements. Key monitoring looks at performance and risk assessment, with consideration of a partnership's main functions, the purpose and outcomes for users and citizens, good governance, promoting values and showing accountability. Members were assured that current partnerships were achieving targets.

Members resolved that the significant partnerships be monitored twice a year, with exceptions reported where necessary, that a mechanism be found for Council representatives to give feedback on partnerships in which they were involved, that the financial information regarding cost benefits/savings, of Shared Services be included in the next report to the Panel.

The Panel welcomed an update on the Council's Transformation Programme. The strategy to deliver savings had two main elements: re-profiling of planned savings through reducing the prudent level of revenue reserves and thus reducing the rate at which the reserves needed to be replenished; secondly identifying savings that could be delivered from April 2012.

Members had some serious concerns about the reduction of funding on concessionary fares but noted that these were the responsibility of the Cumbria County Council.

Members noted the report on the Project Assurance Group. There was some concern over the Upper Viaduct Car Park/Caldew Riverside Project over remedial work to the land.

In considering Corporate Risk Management, the Panel enquired about the reduced risk rating for Disabled Facilities Grants. This was as a result of additional resources from Riverside Carlisle and Cumbria County Council's Health and Social Care Budget. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Panel that there would still be an issue regarding adequate funding of DFGs. The Government formula militated against Carlisle and unless there was a change to the distribution, the Council would continue to struggle to meet its statutory duty. It was resolved that the formula for the Government's distribution of grants for DFGs be circulated to all Members.

Concern was raised over lack of employment opportunity for young people in the city. The A/D for Economic Development said the council was working in partnership with local businesses, The University of Cumbria and Carlisle College, to match skills. As a low wage economy, Carlisle needed to attract business and industry that could generate higher income.

The Panel received an update on the Regional Growth Fund. Our bid in Round 1 had been unsuccessful as had all Cumbrian bids, although the quality of the bid and

its potential impact had been recognised. Hadrian's Wall Partnership had submitted a bid in Round 2 which the Council had supported.

The bid was unsuccessful, basically, because there were insufficient businesses in the area. The Council's role was to facilitate initiatives and support businesses.

The Panel felt that there should be a joint approach, with all agencies in the County involved, including MPs, Members, Officers and local businesses.

The Panel received a detailed report on Discretionary Rate Relief Policy with the various options clearly outlined. It was explained that the dividing line between smaller and larger organisations was a limit of £18k rateable value. This was a nationally accepted benchmark, which gave transparency, clarity and consistency.

The panel resolved, to support option 1 giving 100% rate relief to small and local charities. The resolution was passed on the Chairman's casting vote.

Looking ahead, a Shared Services Task and Finish Group was agreed, to commence in January 2012, with appointees being Cllrs Allison, Bainbridge and Bowditch being

Cllr Stephen Layden

Chair of ROSP

October 2011