

EXECUTIVE REPORT

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

COUNCILLOR MISS E WOODBURN – PORTFOLIO HOLDER

1 Key Issues – Progress Report

1.1 Nuclear Issues

The Prime Minister in his keynote speech at the Labour Party conference pushed nuclear energy issues higher up the agenda and prompted a debate on the future of nuclear power. The anticipation is that Government will want to come to a conclusion on its place within the overall energy policy sooner rather than later. The Council has already expressed its support for reinvestment in the nuclear sector and agreed that Copeland would play its part by looking positively at new reactors to replace Calderhall and contribute to the Country's energy needs. A meeting has been held with our MP who sits on the Government's Energy policy committee and who echoes our support voicing Copeland's views directly in Whitehall.

We know that these future decisions will be informed by the determination of a national solution to the long-term management of radioactive waste. We continue to contribute to the national debate on this issue both through the COWRM process and the DEFRA national review of the existing Low Level Waste Policies. As a result of our input issues of community acceptance are now appearing high on the agenda of both processes. The Government consultation document on LLW Strategy, which is likely to be published in December, is likely to seek views on balancing the impact for local communities hosting radioactive waste. This is a step forward a one that I am sure wouldn't be considered if Copeland had not constantly pushed for this and more at every opportunity.

1.2 Nuleaf

The consultancy brief for the NuLeaf study into community acceptance, the operation of volunteering, veto and community compensation systems for radioactive waste has been completed and the commission is now out to tender.

1.3 Dti

As colleagues will recall Dti did commit to providing Copeland with extra support, recognising the unique role we have when it comes to nuclear issues. This has now been completed and the secondee will be starting with us this month.

1.4 Environment Agency

We have submitted our response on the EA's review of authorisations for Drigg putting forward the Councils views on issues such as priority for local waste needs, possible impact of coastal erosion and sea level changes and the need to consider the site as a storage location for the time being only. We also emphasised our policy that offset packages need to be considered to balance the detriment and the recognition that Copeland needs to be treated the same as other European areas when it comes to nuclear waste sites. As we all know the decision for the LLW site lies with CCC and we have passed on our views and agreed policies to them.

1.5 Thorp

THORP reprocessing remains suspended whilst the Feed Clarification Cell Remedial Project work is completed and other improvements and actions arising from the event investigation is carried out. The target date for restart is 6th February 06.

1.6 BNG

There has been a lot of concern raised over BNFL's preferred option, which is to sell British Nuclear Group. Their reasons are that selling to a new owner gives BNG the best chance of winning the competitions which will begin shortly, they also state it gives them the best chance of a strong future and therefore better career development opportunities as part of a bigger organisation. The sell off will directly affect those 180 people employed in the Site Management Company plus around 700 employed in Project Services. For the others employed within the Site Licence Company terms and conditions will be unaffected.

I think a lot of people are disappointed in the way this has been handled with the communication and consultation now happening after the Board decision. This has not helped the morale of the workforce and has only caused unnecessary unrest for the majority.

The sale does raise serious concerns for us as a Council as it will mean that the overall management could end up in the hands of a company that has no experience of running a site the size of Sellafield and a lot of the experience, expertise and trust that the present management team have built up will be lost and only time and a proven record will help that return.

I feel we should make our concerns known both to the BNFL Board, NDA and direct to Government who will ultimately make the decision. We need to ensure that the decision is made with the full facts and emphasise that safety and community confidence are more important than finances.

1.7 **West Cumbria Strategic Forum**

The meeting of the WCSF met in September and was chaired by Alan Johnson – Secretary of State for the Dept. of Trade and Industry. I along with Tim Stoddard made a presentation that highlighted the present and predicted future of West Cumbria and what transformational projects are needed. The meeting was well attended by Government and Senior Civil servants and the need for a practical evidence - based plan and timeline was agreed.

This need has now been taken up by local and regional partners and a Task and Finish Executive group has been set up with the purpose to lead the development of the plan which includes preparing the brief, identifying “iconic” consultants, funding, partner inputs, project management arrangements and to develop a timeline, CBC’s rep is Fergus McMorrow.

The plan would be based around the priority areas identified including Infrastructure, Nuclear opportunities, Skills and Higher Education, ICT, Sustainable diversification, Tourism and Image.

The plan needs to have a bold, assertive approach with local, regional and national buy in and will provide a new dimension and be additional to what is already in place. It must deliver a 15-year global vision setting out a route map for a sustainable new economy for West Cumbria.

We have 6 months to complete this task in time for the next Forum meeting. I will keep members updated on how this is progressing.

1.8 **Socio-Economic Plan**

BNG has produced a socio-economic plan for 2005/06, which has been distributed to all Councillors. The aims of the plan are to

- Ensure they are addressing the socio-economic needs of the NDA and the local community
- Work in partnership with the local council representatives and the various agencies
- Provide some stability and continuity for projects the site has traditionally supported.

The funding criteria will continue to support 3 main areas

- Economic regeneration
- Community / social sector projects
- Education

The major projects that will be supported during this financial year are

- West Cumbria development Fund / West Cumbria Development Agency – Job creation / retention
- Westlakes Research Institute – HE Links / Consultancy development
- Gen 11 – Training / skills development
- Cumbria Inward Investment Agency
- Social sector projects – Princes Trust – Whitehaven Community Trust – Weston Spirit
- Education – Engineering Education Scheme – Educational Resources

During the year through dialogue with various stakeholders other strategic projects will emerge which will be supported through the plan. The strategy is aimed at providing support to

- Develop the supply chain
- Develop existing and new businesses
- Include socio-economic requirements in sub-contracts
- Retain and develop skills – Inc National Nuclear Academy

As said Members have all been provided with a copy of the plan and we will have an opportunity to work with BNG in agreeing the 06/07 plan.

1.9 Calder Hall cooling towers

One of the most distinctive views of the Sellafield the cooling towers are due to be demolished in December. The towers are approx 88m high and started operating in the late 50's until generation stopped in March 2003. Potential demolition methods have been under assessment since the towers became redundant and research has demonstrated that explosive demolition is the preferred method. Over the last 30 years more than 200 similar structures have been successfully demolished using this method. Most of the impact will be limited to the Calder Power Station and are readily addressed through engineering controls.

There was a move to have the towers listed but a decision has been taken that the historic relevance is within the reactors rather than the towers themselves and investigations are being made into the viability of doing this.

2.0 Higher Education

There has been a lot of publicity with regard to HE provision within Cumbria but what is obviously the main focus for us is how West Cumbria fits in with the overall plans. After reading sir Martin Harris's latest proposals I do struggle to find the linkages with West Cumbria's present provision including Westlakes Research Institute. The proposal is to create a University of Cumbria from 1st August 2007 with the headquarters located in Carlisle. St Martin's College of HE and Cumbria Institute of the Arts would dissolve and become the new university the following day. The Lakes College would be bound into this agreement and it is likely that the college would act as a centre for certain subjects associated with their expertise and with progression needs, as articulated by demand.

One of the concerns I have is the clear statement and I quote from the report "That quite separately from the University of Cumbria there are proposals to establish or re-establish a major strength in research to underpin both nuclear decommissioning and probably a new generation of commission"

We know that Westlakes Research Institute has just been taken over by the University of Central Lancashire, a move we welcomed and which guaranteed continued funding and investment but we do not want to be isolated from the University therefore further clarification is needed and will be sought from the relevant bodies. I will keep members updated as more information is provided.

2.1 Successful fraud investigations

As of the 07th of October 2005 the fraud prevention team have successfully prosecuted 5 cases. Sentencing has ranged from a 60hour community punishment order to 2 curfew orders, and 16-month prison sentence. One case has been adjourned pending pre sentence reports but is due to be dealt with in the next few weeks.

The 6th of October edition of the Whitehaven news carried an article about two of the cases mentioned. We have also delivered 6 cautions and 2 Administrative penalties (a version of a fine) There are currently 5 cases awaiting summons and 2 Administrative penalties awaiting action. Six months into the financial year we have prosecuted more cases than ever before and hopefully the rest of the year will continue to be as productive.

2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Capital Programme Monitoring 2005/06

Date of Decision: 27 September 2005

Decision Reference: EXE/05/0066

Context: This is a progress report that advises Members of expenditure to the end of June 2005, and any amendments needed to the Capital Programme for 2005/06.

Decision

That

a) the spend to date and project managers comments as detailed be noted;

b) that the amendments to the Capital Programme totalling £1,001,379 (£50,000 CBC Funded and £951,379 Externally Funded) giving a revised Capital Programme of £4,499,175 be approved and noted; and

c) that the approved programme as detailed be noted

Subject: Urgent Actions

Date of Decision: 27 September 2005

Decision Reference: EXE/05/0073

Context: To note actions taken on ground of urgency

Decision

That a) actions taken by the Head of Finance and Business Development in consultation with Leader of the Council in approving funding from the conference budget to enable Councillor G Clements to attend a Low demand Housing conference which is not on the approved conference list be noted; and

b) actions taken by the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder – Environmental and Cultural Services in placing an advertisement inviting applications for an ad hoc list of contractors fro the Christmas Lighting Contract be noted

Subject: Replacement to Fraud Case Management Software

Date of Decision: 27 September 2005

Decision Reference: EXE/05/0074

Context: This report evaluates options to replace the obsolete Fraud Case Management Software

Decision

That

- (i) the purchase of the Civica Fraud Database Management System be approved;**
- (ii) the use of £11,725 be approved from contingencies; and**
- (iii) the annual revenue cost be met from the existing revenue budget.**

Subject: Addendum to agenda Item 13 – Replacement of Fraud Case Management Software

Date of Decision: 27 September 2005

Decision Reference: EXE/05/0076

Context: To receive additional information relating to Agenda Item 13 which could not be considered under part 1 of the Agenda

Decision

That the addendum be noted