

Report from Overview and Scrutiny

Lead Members: Cllrs P Connolly, Mrs Y R T Clarkson, J Kane,
Mrs W Metherell

Lead Officer: T Capper

December 2007 to January 2008

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

1. Review of Car Parking Policies

The Joint Car Parking Task and Finish Group held its third and final meeting on 12 December 2007 that was chaired by Councillor Mrs D Dawes (Barrow Borough Council). Councillor Henry Wormstrup was replaced by Councillor John Kane as this Council's representative on the group.

The Group continued its consideration of the proposed County Council revision of its parking policies for the whole of Cumbria with a full day witness evidence session.

A number of changes were made to the proposed draft policies including that:

- Charging for residents parking permits should be considered providing that there is Local Borough / District support for introducing the charge.
- Charging for on-street parking within defined areas can be considered where:
 - i) the demand for parking exceeds the supply;
 - ii) the local council is in agreement and;
 - iii) residential exemptions are in place.

The Group's final recommendations were that:

- Cumbria County Council's Cabinet be requested to support, in principle, the draft parking policies.
- Cumbria County Council's Cabinet be requested to consult fully with the District / Borough Councils and other key stakeholders on the draft parking policies before the policies are implemented.

- Following consultation and the adoption of an approved policy, its effectiveness be reviewed by joint scrutiny a year following implementation.

As the Task and Finish Group was set up by the Cumbria County Joint Scrutiny Overview Group, the Joint Scrutiny Group has been asked to confirm the recommendations. Once this has happened the recommendations will be submitted to the County Council's Cabinet. It is hoped that it will be able to report to the County's Cabinet in February.

If the County Council approve the recommendation to consult fully with the District / Borough Councils a report will be submitted to the next meeting of council.

The County Council are aiming to implement the new parking policies in April.

2. Concessionary Travel

The Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 December 2007 considered the recommendations from the Concessionary Travel Task and Finish Group.

The Committee were informed of further evidence regarding the effect of the Council's off street car parks on the usage of the concessionary travel schemes. It noted that the effect was considered to be not that significant at the current time in Copeland.

The Committee also noted that the railcards element of the discretionary schemes had been originally started last year on a one year trial basis. The Committee felt that the discretionary parts of the schemes were an essential part of the Concessionary Travel schemes and should be retained.

The Committee considered the level of budgetary provision that the council should make for the 2008/09 budget. It noted that the most likely scenario recommended by officers was of an additional £77,000 which was based on an increase in the usage of all the concessionary travel schemes by 4% to 80% usage of all eligible users.

The Committee noted that this did not include an account of the growing percentage of the population that would become eligible for the scheme next year and may underestimate the extra take up in the scheme that the Government's publicity for the new scheme could bring about. It was this underestimation that had caused the overspend in this year's budget. Furthermore the increase in the value of travel vouchers would also have an effect of up to £40,000 on the budget.

The Committee recommended that:

- (A) the Council build £868,000 into the 2008/09 revenue budget to cover the cost of the Council's concessionary travel schemes.

- (B) the Council's discretionary concessionary travel schemes be continued and the value of the travel vouchers be increased to £25.
- (C) the Cumbria and Lancashire Officer group be requested to investigate a number of issues relating to the statutory bus pass scheme and a report be submitted to the next meeting of this committee on the outcome of:
 1. What arrangements will be made for Companions to Disabled People,
 2. Whether Cumbria will continue to operate a 24 hour scheme, and
 3. Whether tickets will be single or return in Cumbria and if return whether a cross boundary fare will be applied.
- (D) future budgetary projections for concessionary travel take into account the projected increase in population of those people over 60 years of age.
- (E) an allowance for the Maritime Festival be made in the future budgetary projections for concessionary travel in those years when the Festival is run.
- (F) officers explore the feasibility of allowing holders of the bus pass to use it on the rail network in a combined card in Cumbria,
- (G) Cumbria County Council be requested to improve the bus service in Millom.
- (H) Cumbria County Council be requested to ensure that more courtesy buses are made available for use on routes in Copeland,
- (I) Officers investigate whether the Council could implement an initiative to involve community groups in voluntary schemes to help improve the type and take up of the concessionary travel and associated schemes.
- (J) the NHS organisations in Copeland be requested to give greater publicity and encouragement to use the NHS Hospital Travel Costs Scheme.

The Executive considered these recommendations at its meeting on 18 December 2007 and agreed that they should be referred to the Resource Planning Working Group.

The Resource Planning Working Group at its meeting on 19 December 2007 agreed that recommendations A and B be approved and that the Executive be recommended to agree to fund the £140,000 shortfall from general reserves in 2007/2008, and reviewed for future years.

3. Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave

The Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave Task and Finish Group has now met twice and it is intended that its recommendations will be presented to the

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 18 January 2008.