

## **Report from Overview and Scrutiny**

Lead Members: Councillors B Dixon, Mrs Y R T Clarkson, J Kane, Mrs W Metherell

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

### **1. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

#### **A. The Committee held a special meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010 to consider the proposals for the West Cumbrian Strategic Partnership**

The Chair introduced Sheila Stokes-White who is a Local Improvement Adviser (formerly called Neighbourhood Renewal Advisers) funded through the North West Economic Improvement Partnership in collaboration with West Cumbria to carry out a review of the West Cumbrian Partnership arrangements.

The Chair also pointed out that he had received concerns from UNISON in relation to the staff, and from the Chair of the West Cumbria Partnership Forum, Willie Slavin.

Members considered a report from the acting Chief Executive Fergus McMorrow who addressed the meeting in respect of its contents. The report was due to go to the Council's Executive on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and Council on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

They heard that while the trigger for the review had been due to budgetary pressures in the first instance, indicating financial uncertainties with no sustainable way forward, there were other emerging concerns around insufficient levels of partnership engagement and a disconnect with locality working and community leadership, also picked up in the Place Survey.

It is recognised that there will still be strong working at County level, and that the thematic groups would be progressed. Effective local strategic partnership arrangements have to be put in place, which is where Sheila Stokes-White comes in.

Members were advised that the Council is the host employer for the staff, who had been through a period of consultation over the past 8 months, and that costs would be proportioned between the three Councils, Cumbria County, Allerdale and Copeland. They were also told that Allerdale Borough Council had already made their decision, in support, as had their Local Area Committee. The matter would be coming before Copeland's Local Area Committee in this cycle of meetings.

The Acting Chief Executive expressed the view that if the new proposals were agreed they would lead to an improvement in community leadership, an increased ability for Copeland members to influence decisions, directly based on locality and therefore not as diluted as previously.

Finally the principles, supported by Allerdale Borough Council, will not involve moving away from West Cumbrian working, but recognise that both Boroughs need to engage more with their local communities.

Members debated the report. Concerns around a potential perception of a division by for example Government Office NorthWest, and isolation by the County, were allayed by assurances that the two authorities would still be working together, but with a more focused agenda, as experience has shown that it is not always appropriate to work together on all things, given their diverse nature. The impact on the Sustainable Community Strategy and whether there had been an analysis of good and bad LSP workings was raised, and whether the Council had sufficient information to make an informed decision. Concerns around lack of clarity in the report and level of consultation with partners were expressed, but given Allerdale had already come to a view, Copeland needed to do so as soon as possible, as new arrangements needed to be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. Members were advised that the normal expectation from Government was for there to be an LSP at County and District level, and it was unusual to have the joint arrangement now under review. Resource and capacity implications were raised with regard to in house support, particularly in the light of the current service level agreement. It was pointed out that there is some current duplication, and a need to re-prioritise and refocus which should address some of these concerns.

Chris Shaw a CALC representative was permitted to contribute to the debate, stating that Copeland Councillors had not engaged with the current LSP arrangements. It was suggested that this may also have applied to some extent at Allerdale. Members acknowledged the importance of the point made, considering the wider issue of feedback from outside bodies generally, the allocation of positions, the workloads of and need to support portfolio holders and other members, apolitical working, and voicing their concerns that ways must be found to address this in the future, possibly through the choosing to change programme.

The Local Improvement Adviser commented that she was currently at the information gathering stage, but thought the debate had been extremely healthy and welcome at this stage. She looked forward to pulling some draft ideas together by the end of January with input from relevant stakeholders, including overview and scrutiny members.

The Chair asked that the letter from the Chair of the West Cumbria Partnership Forum be circulated to members of the Executive so they had it before them at their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

Members expressed the view that they felt happier about the reasons for change from what they heard, and the way forward.

The Committee agreed that the following recommendations should be forwarded to Executive:

1. That they consider the letter from the Chair of the West Cumbria Partnership Forum in their deliberations at their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010

2. Arising out of the debate at the Overview and Scrutiny Special Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010, that, whilst members are now better informed regarding the process relating to the review of the Local Strategic Partnership arrangements, that the work in moving forward on this new arrangement is done in collaboration with Members of Overview and Scrutiny to ensure Member involvement in the future Local Strategic Partnership, and is not left simply to officers to develop, this recommendation to be taken forward to Council on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

## **B. The Committee met on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and considered the following:**

### **Compliments, Comments and Complaints**

Members were provided with details of Compliments, Comments and Complaints by the Customer Relations Officer, for the period July 2009 to September 2009. This showed a total of 23 complaints were investigated through the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure, compared to 24 in the second quarter of 2008/09.

Members were also advised that 12 Compliments were also recorded in the same period.

The Committee was advised that a system to monitor Freedom of Information requests was currently being developed and would be added to Covalent. Members agreed that they should consider for the future the best use of the data presented to ensure continual improvement

### **Gender Equality Scheme**

Members noted that this item had also been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Safer Stronger Communities Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2010, to which Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Children, Young People & Healthy Communities Committee had also been invited.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the draft Gender Equality Scheme to the Committee and advised that this was part of the normal 3 yearly review.

The revised scheme proposed a number of actions including:

- Consulting stakeholders and taking into account feedback
- Gathering and using information (workforce and community profiling) in reviewing policies and practices
- Ensuring Crime and Disorder Strategies focus on combating domestic violence
- Providing information to ensure that victims of domestic violence can find appropriate help
- Revising and reviewing Equality Impact Assessments and implementing actions in Equality Impact Assessment action plans
- Reporting on progress annually and reviewing the scheme triennially.

During the discussion that followed, Members expressed concern that there was no domestic violence refuge in Copeland and that when

victims were moved, there was a knock on effect to the education of any children involved.

The Council's Housing team are to be asked to provide this Committee with current refuge arrangements for women and children in Copeland. Those members who also sit on Outside Bodies were asked to ensure this subject is given a high priority at meetings they attend, in particular those who attend the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership meetings.

There was an undertaking that Members comments would be taken into account before the Gender Equality Scheme was submitted to Full Council, however, it was also noted this was a working document and could be reviewed at any time. The Committee agreed that the Gender Equality Scheme be updated following Members comments and submitted to Full Council

### **Work Plan**

Consideration was given to the Work Plan of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

During discussion of this item, a Special Meeting of this committee was requested to consider the draft Corporate Improvement Plan and the Budget for 2010-2011. This was arranged for 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

A discussion regarding Strengthening Local Democracy was also requested to be made an agenda item for the next meeting of this Committee.

Consideration was given to a request to scrutinise the County Council's Winter Maintenance Programme for the Borough of Copeland.

It was believed that the County Council's Local Area Committee would already be doing this and therefore copies of their findings may be sufficient. However, depending on its outcome, Members should keep this in mind for a potential scrutiny review in the next municipal year .

Members generally felt the County Council's staff had performed well in difficult weather conditions and congratulated them.

It was felt that any specific concerns in the Copeland area should be passed to the Portfolio Holder.

It was noted that the Housing issues report was due out, but had been delayed until March. The report would then be presented to the Strategic Housing Panel. This Committee felt that it should maintain a 'watching brief'.

### **Progress Report on the Scrutiny Review**

It was advised that following the initial meeting for Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Members held on 14 December 2009, two workshops had now also been held on 11 January 2010 and 20 January 2010 for all non-Executive Members to discuss the future role of Overview and Scrutiny at Copeland.

At the last workshop it was agreed that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman would meet with the Interim Scrutiny Consultant to prepare a progress report. Any further comments were to be given to them as soon as possible

### **Executive Decisions**

Reports considered by the Executive at its meeting on 18 January 2010 were considered and noted.

#### **C. The Committee held a special meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to consider the draft Corporate Implementation Plan and the Budget for 2010-11**

### **Corporate Implementation Plan 2010/2011**

Draft version v0.5 of the Corporate Improvement Plan 2010/2011 was circulated to the Committee and an overview was provided by the Acting Corporate Director Quality of Life. Comments made during the debate were taken on board.

During the discussion that followed, Members requested that any changes made between version v0.3, which had been circulated with the Agenda along with the current Corporate Improvement Plan, and version v0.5 be highlighted and sent to the Committee.

The Committee questioned whether the staffing structure allowed for the Implementation Plan to be delivered and were advised that delivery was monitored through Covalent. A request was also made for the latest Covalent report to be circulated.

It was agreed that, as Members had expressed a desire to be involved earlier in the review process, prior to the setting of the 2010/11 workplan, a workshop would be arranged to debate how overview and scrutiny should best be involved in the future corporate planning process.

### **Preparation of the Council's Budget 2010/2011+**

The Head of Finance and Management Information Systems presented to the Committee, setting out the process which had been followed in preparing the draft Budget proposal, which would then be considered by Executive on 16 February 2010.

Members were advised that Resource Planning Working Group had agreed a Workplan at its 3 July 2009 meeting and had agreed to commence a formal budget consultation using the SIMALTO questionnaire methodology at their 23 July meeting.

The Committee heard that the budget proposal for 2010-2011 was sustainable, however the budget for 2011-2012 must be positioned accordingly. There was a need to further examine Partnership Working and the services the Council wants to provide above the Statutory services.

During the discussion that followed, Members requested information regarding which services were classed as Statutory. Members also requested information regarding Total Place.

Members also asked if the results of the SIMALTO consultation were available and could be placed on the intranet.

The Committee agreed that it should now examine its own role within the budget process and ensure it feeds properly into the future process to produce valued outcomes for the community, The Committee was, on balance, happy with the budget process outlined and led by the Head of Finance and Management Information Systems over the last 12 months, but were mindful of the need to maintain that momentum in the future,

**D. The Committee met on 15<sup>th</sup> February and considered the following:**

**Report From Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee – Place Survey Scrutiny Reviews**

The County Scrutiny Manager presented a report from Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee – Place Survey Scrutiny Reviews to the Committee.

Members were advised that the Place Survey is undertaken in all English counties every two years, the next one being due in September 2010.

The 2008 Place Survey in Cumbria showed higher levels of dissatisfaction for local authorities than in previous years and higher than other public sector services.

Members were also advised that a national trend that had emerged from the 2008 Place Survey was the strong relationship between information on services and higher public satisfaction. Communication and information on services were key factors in how the public rates a service overall.

A task group met officers from two authorities that had scored the highest and lowest for the following two service areas:

- Refuse Collection
- Street Cleanliness

During the discussion that followed, The Committee raised their concern that the public in general were unaware of who is responsible for what services in their area.

The Committee then considered the eight recommendations detailed in the report:

- 1.1 Cumbria's Local Authorities should examine how they currently endeavour to engage with the public to inform service design or reconfiguration. This means involving the public as a first part of the process of service change, rather than consulting on a list of options at a later stage.
- 1.2 Authorities should consider how they engage with colleagues from neighbouring authorities in Cumbria as part of the wider consultation process for service change.
- 1.3 Authorities should consider the possibilities of harmonising service delivery at or near district boundaries, where this is practicable.

- 1.4 Cabinet/responsible elected members should consider whether and how they engage in information-sharing on key service issues with colleagues in other local authorities across Cumbria.
- 1.5 Where street cleanliness services are subject to change, local authority branding should be considered as part of that process to raise the public profile of that service.
- 1.6 The Cumbria Strategic Partnership should consider how member and public engagement informs the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy refreshment process, to help shape local targets that have a greater resonance with local people and elected members.
- 1.7 The Joint Scrutiny Committee should consider how it engages with the public as part of its scrutiny review practice and consider the merits of establishing its own Community Engagement Framework and protocols to this end.
- 1.8 The Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee includes in its work Programme the outcomes of the 2010 Cumbria Place Survey, when that information is available.

The committee agreed with recommendations 1.1 to 1.5 above.

### **Work Plan**

At this point in the meeting, due to the presence of the County Scrutiny Manager, consideration was given to the Work Plan of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, in particular the items on 'The barriers to closer collaboration between Councils' and 'The ability/capacity of partners in Copeland to deliver the Local Area Agreement'.

Committee agreed that the two items be joined as one on the Work Plan.

### **Customer First**

The Acting Director Quality of Life, Head of Policy and Performance and Waste Services Manager presented to the Committee on 'Customer First'.

Members were advised that the 'Customer First' project was created following the Place Survey results. The need to raise the profile and skill levels on customer care were highlighted, along with the training of Officers and Members.

Members were also advised that calls to Copeland Direct were already being recorded and used in one to one staff training. At this point of the meeting a draft briefing paper was distributed to Members, which included a summary of the activity to date.

The Committee was then updated on changes made within Waste Management where, over the last 18 months and with assistance from the Process Improvement Team and the Waste Management staff, areas for improvement had been identified. These included Bin Emptying, Fly Tipping and Litter Picking.

The Borough had now been divided into four zones and a waste management team allocated to each zone. Each team was able to create their own daily work plan.

At the same time, a target was set of a 5,000 litre reduction in fuel usage and this was well on the way to being achieved.

Waste management plan to conduct a short survey on their service within the next few months.

It was suggested that this item be included in the Committee's Work Plan for the municipal year 2010-2011.

The Committee agreed that the update on Customer First be received.

### **Locality Working**

An update on Locality Working was provided by the Head of Development Strategy. This included updates on the Pilot schemes at Howgate/North East Copeland, North West Copeland and Mid Copeland.

During the discussion that followed, Members expressed concern at how some areas, not already involved in the Pilot scheme, would be communicated to, particularly Whitehaven that had no Town or Parish Council.

Members also queried the funding arrangements of the Locality Managers.

It was agreed that the update on Locality Working be received.

### **Member's Communication**

Councillor Hitchen raised the issue of communication to Members and in particular the number of Members who still did not receive communications via email, which was currently 22. This was for a number of reasons including not having a Council email address or a Laptop.

It was suggested and agreed that a Members IT Sub Group be reformed.

### **Progress Report on the Scrutiny Review**

The Interim Scrutiny Consultant provided an update report on the Scrutiny Review. A suggestion was put forward for a further one day workshop to be held on Friday 26 February from 9:00am until 3:00pm. The morning session would be cover Governance Arrangements and the afternoon session on Structures.

Committee agreed that a further one day workshop to be held on Friday 26 February from 9:00am until 3:00pm at a venue to be arranged.

### **Strengthening Local Democracy**

Councillor R Pitt raised a question regarding the process surrounding the Strengthening Local Democracy consultation.

Members were advised that the consultation document was received at the end of July 2009. The subject was discussed by Full Council on



8 September 2009 and a decision made to delegate the response to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Portfolio Holder (Councillor N Williams) and Shadow Portfolio Holder (Councillor C Whiteside).

A meeting for all members was held on 25 September 2009, following which the response was sent to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 30 September 2009.

Following a discussion the Committee asked for copies of the response to be circulated to all Members.

It was agreed that Council's response on the Strengthening Local Democracy consultation, sent to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 30 September 2009, be circulated to all Members by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

## **2. Children, Young People and Healthy Communities**

**The Committee met on 4 February 2010 and along with its work plan considered the following:**

### **IDeA Healthy Communities Peer Review and Health Inequalities Agenda**

The recently appointed Health Improvement Officer presented to the Committee on the IDeA Healthy Communities Peer Review.

Members were advised that this Officer's role, which was part funded by Cumbria County Council and the Primary Care Trust was to look at the health of both Council Staff and Local Communities with the aim of improving life expectancy.

The Peer Review had identified four areas for specific attention, these were Physical Activity, Smoking, Alcohol and Healthy Eating & Nutrition and a draft action plan was being worked on to address them.

With regard to Physical Activity, organised lunchtime walks for staff had already commenced and this was being extended to other localities.

Opportunities were being provided to help people stop smoking with clinics for staff and promotion through community clinic and schools.

With regard to Alcohol, the Health Improvement Officer was working in partnership with the Police, Local Communities and Licensed premises.

Education for Council staff in the form of posters had already started.

In conjunction with the Food Standards Agency, promotional information regarding Healthy Eating and Nutrition was being distributed. For Council staff, the contents of vending machines would be reviewed to ensure healthy options were available.

## **Closer to Home**

The Committee received an update report on 'Closer to Home', which had previously been reported to the Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2010.

Members requested that NHS Cumbria be invited to a future meeting of this Committee to provide an update, as members continued to be concerned over a number of aspects of Closer to Home.

## **Quarterly Update Report for Cumbria Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee from NHS Cumbria**

The Committee received the NHS Cumbria Quarterly Update Report for OSC (January 2010).

During the discussion that followed, Members expressed their concern regarding people who have attempted to register for dental care and although promised an acknowledgement, have not received one and this has resulted in confusion over whether or not they are registered.

The Deputy Chair agreed to take this up at the next County Scrutiny meeting.

Concern was also expressed regarding LIFT (Local Improvement Finance Trust) and it was agreed that this would be included in the letter to NHS Cumbria as detailed above.

## **Briefing Report from the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Manager**

The Committee received a Briefing report from the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Manager that had been presented to the Cumbria Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2010.

## **Minutes of Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee received the Minutes of the Cumbria Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 October 2009, attended by the Deputy Chairman, Councillor G Garrity.

During the discussion that followed, Members were advised that with regard to Pathology Services in West Cumbria, a 'Hot Lab' would remain at the West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven, whilst cancer testing would take place at Carlisle.

Members also stated that the Cumbria Link Report referred to in the Minutes of the Cumbria Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee had not answered the questions previously raised.

Members queried the update on Fuel Poverty and asked how this linked in with ongoing work at Copeland Borough Council to produce a Fuel Poverty Strategy and were advised that a briefing on the Copeland Strategy would be held at the end of February 2010.

## **Work Plan**

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Plan.

Members were requested to provide suggestions to the Chair, Deputy Chair or Interim Scrutiny Consultant on Youth Provision in Copeland and how to engage the youth in the Council's decision making process. A report would then be prepared for the next meeting of this Committee on how to progress.

A further Member was sought to join the Task and Finish Group looking at how voluntary agencies can access funds and Councillor S Meter volunteered.

The Committee requested that County Councillors T Knowles and D Southward be invited to a future meeting to update Members on the County Council's plans for building schools for the future.

### **3. Economic Development and Enterprise**

**The Committee met on 18 February 2010 and along with its work plan considered the following:**

#### **Regional Strategy 2010 – High Level Strategic Plan**

The Head of Development Strategy provided the Committee with an overview of the Regional Strategy for England's North West 2010, contained in the High Level Strategic Framework consultation document.

Members attention was drawn to the four strategy strands,

- Capitalise on the opportunities of moving to a low carbon economy and address climate change,
- Build on the sources of international competitive advantage and regional distinctiveness,
- Release the potential of people and tackle poverty,
- Ensure the right housing and infrastructure for sustainable growth.

During the discussion that followed, Members considered the four Strategic Options listed in the document;

- Option 1 – Current position ('Business as usual').
- Option 2 – Focus on economic opportunity.
- Option 3 – Focus on protecting environmental resources and taking full advantage of environmental opportunities.
- Option 4 – Focus on regeneration and development to tackle social deprivation and inclusion.

Members were concerned that there was very little mention of the nuclear industry / energy coast, connectivity issues in West Cumbria (both transport and Grid Connectivity) and does not adequately acknowledge any of the issues facing Copeland.

The Committee felt it could not give specific support to any of the strategic options listed and encouraged Members and the public to respond to this consultation using the website address shown in the report.

A request was also made to invite Mr Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of Northwest Regional Development Agency, to attend a future meeting of this Committee.

Committee agreed that:

- a) the overview be received and the Head of Development Strategy be supported in putting Copeland's case forward, and
- b) Mr Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of Northwest Regional Development Agency be invited to attend a future meeting of this Committee.

### **Work Plan**

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Plan for 2009/10 and it was agreed that the Work Plan be amended/updated.

### **Revised Planning Enforcement Manual and Review of Enforcement of Conditions on Planning Decisions**

The Development Control Manager introduced the recently appointed Planning Enforcement Officer to the Committee and presented an overview on Planning Enforcement.

Committee were advised that all the requirements of the Task and Finish Group's report to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 21 August 2008 had now been met except for the establishment of an Enforcement Forum. They were also advised that documents would be added to the Council's website.

Members stated that they welcomed the appointment of a Planning Enforcement Officer and the introduction of the revised Planning Enforcement Manual. And they had already noticed a big improvement in planning enforcement. They were pleased that the message was now getting out following the scrutiny action which had highlighted the need for improvement, and congratulated the officers on the progress that had been made.

The Planning Enforcement Officer provided the Committee with examples of the types of Enforcement activity together with data and statistics on action taken since August 2009 in relation to breaches of condition.

It was agreed that

- a) the overview on the Revised Planning Enforcement Manual and the Review of Enforcement of Conditions on Planning Decisions be noted, and
- b) Members support the post of Planning Enforcement Officer becoming permanent.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair recognized that the Committee's Task and Finish Group had carried out a very good piece of scrutiny in this area in 2008, the benefits of which were now being realised in the community, and he commended the committee on an excellent piece of work.

#### **4. Safer Stronger Communities**

The next meeting of this Committee is 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

#### **5. Cumbrian Joint Scrutiny Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

Attended by Chair and Deputy Chair OSC (M)  
Details to be included in the report to the next Full Council meeting.