

Executive Report to Full Council – 6 September 2012

Strategic Leadership and Nuclear Portfolio – Councillor Elaine Woodburn

Nuclear Issues

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership

On 19th July the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership met for the last time and agreed its final report. The report contains the Partnerships opinions on the range of issues that it has reviewed through its detailed work programme over the last 3 years. The report will be published in August and then considered by the 3 local authorities, Copeland, Allerdale and Cumbria County Councils as identified 'Decision Making Bodies' (DMBs) in the Government's process. The three Councils will need to consider the report and to agree to participate or not in the next stage of the process, which starts the search for a site. For Copeland Borough Council a special meeting of Council will discuss the final report on 26th September and the Council's Executive will consider a report and make a decision about participation or not in the next stage at a meeting on 11th October. Both Allerdale Borough and Cumbria County Councils are planning to hold their own decision making meetings on the same day.

Nuclear New Build

Further meetings with NuGeneration Ltd regarding their proposals to develop the Moorside site for a new nuclear power station have been held focusing on agreeing a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA). Such an agreement ensures that the resource implications for the Councils of responding to the development consent process are identified and provided for. The PPA is now subject to final legal checking prior to signature. NuGeneration Ltd will be commencing site characterization works in the autumn.

On Friday 11th May National Grid announced potential strategic route options for upgrading the electricity network to take the power generated from the Moorside project, and other power generating activities in Copeland and elsewhere in Cumbria, to the national market. The consultation process included a Members briefing by officials from National Grid on 20th June and a Borough Council initial response to the consultation exercise was subsequently agreed at a meeting of the Executive on 10th July prior to formal submission to National Grid. Again the resource implications for the Council from the engagement with National Grid are the subject of a Planning Performance Agreement which is now agreed and signed by participating local authorities across Cumbria and Lancashire. National Grid will now be considering all the consultation responses and will be making an announcement on their preferred option(s) in the autumn, in advance of commencing discussions with stakeholders around potential detailed route corridor options.

Sellafield Ltd

Work continues to progress on a range of security enhancements on the Sellafield site. As part of a programme of continuous improvement Sellafield Ltd, working with NDA, DECC, Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation, have been developing a range of physical security enhancements alongside operational changes. Physical enhancements include changes to the perimeter fences and access to the River Calder. So far an additional 2200m of fencing has been provided and a further 9000m will be in place by October. In addition new police accommodation and control rooms will also be required. The programme includes the transfer of some of CNC's current roles to a civilian guard force via a contract with Mitie Total Security. CNC will continue to provide a range of security roles and have increased the provision of armed officers at the site. Under new arrangements 100% vehicle searching will be required and this will be introduced progressively to be completed by summer 2014. Under this policy no passenger vehicles will be permitted to enter the site and so to accommodate this plans to improve public transport infrastructure around the site are taking shape, to include additional bus and rail provision and off-site car parking in key satellite locations. Discussions with the company continue around the transport and vehicle access elements of this project. To date nearly 200 employees have been relocated to the Chapel Bank offices in Workington. Longer term, the company plan to occupy the Albion Square office development in Whitehaven to its full capacity and are continuing to engage with the NDA, Copeland Borough Council and Britain's Energy Coast to pursue this development and other off-site opportunities.

Introduction of the new Guard Force is also well underway with personnel now mobilised at all of the site access gates. To date, 95% of personnel recruited are from within the local area.

Finance and Resources Portfolio – Councillor Gillian Troughton

Finance

- The final accounts for 2010/11 have now been formally signed off by the Audit Commission.
- The final accounts for 2011/12 were completed on target by 30th June and are now subject to the formal audit process.
- Finance staff are starting a review of the debtors system and sending out invitations to user groups to comment / get involved. Meetings will start in early September.
- The Whole of Government Accounts deadline was 31st July and was met.
- Consultation with the other major precepting authorities on the proposals for the local council tax discount scheme has started. Work on the implementation of the new scheme continues.

- Work on the implications of the localisation of business rates also continues. The picture is becoming clearer and we will be contributing to the consultation, but we will not know the exact position until final figures are released in December.
- Performance workshops have taken place with staff within the Revenues and Benefits shared service. This is looking at best practice across the business processes and should result in improved performance.

Contracts & Property

- The resurfacing work to Lancashire Road commenced on the 31/08/2012 and is due to complete on the 03/08/2012 under budget and 1 week ahead of schedule.
- The work at Cleator Moor car park has commenced and is being undertaken in a phased approach to ensure that disruption to the public is kept to a minimum.
- The resurfacing work at Moresby is now complete. This work was predominantly undertaken at the weekend to ensure no disruption to the operation of the site.
- Tank Interceptor and drains installed at Moresby parks.

Legal Services

- The statement of licensing policy under the Gambling Act 2005 has been revised and is ready to go to out to consultation. It will be reported to Licensing Committee and post-consultation Council approval will be sought at the December meeting.
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- Working in partnership with the Copeland Safety Partnership beer mats advertising the Samaritans have been circulated to licence-holders for placing in pubs. A consultation is underway with taxi drivers on an appropriate dress code to try and improve standards.

Performance and Transformation Portfolio – Councillor John Bowman

Democratic

- Member Personal Development Plan's refresh are proceeding. Member Training and Development Panel reviewing progress early August, and into September. Members who have not yet completed a refresh are asked to do so as soon as possible.
- Our Assessment Visit by North West Employers for our Re-Accreditation to NWEQ Member Development Charter will be on 11 September and we are nearing completion of the evidence file supporting our case for re-accreditation. The visit on

11 September will involve interviews with key members and officers, including the Leader and Chief Executive, and a random selection of Councillors.

Housing, Planning and Community Safety Portfolio – Councillor George Clements

Planning Policy Update

Consultation on the Pre-submission draft of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD took place between 31st May and 13th July 2012. We received more than 150 responses from 33 organisations and individuals. Council Officers are currently reviewing these comments and developing the Council's response to them.

The comments, together with the Council's proposed response to them will be presented to a special meeting of Full Council in October, when Full Council will be asked for approval to submit the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD to the Secretary of State for public Examination.

Consultation on the Whitehaven Town Centre and Harbourside Supplementary Planning Document took place between April and June 2012. The document has now been amended to take account of the comments we received and the adoption of the final version of the Supplementary Planning Document is a separate item on this meeting's agenda.

Building Control/Development Control

The Council's building control service has been undertaking a substantial programme of change to working procedures in recent months in working towards a paperless office environment. This will allow the service to operate more efficiently through mobile site work and by consulting with stakeholders electronically. The electronic capture of Building Regulations applications is progressing well.

Despite the disruption to normal working procedures inevitable in a period of change the service has continued to maintain high performance standards. Over the first quarter of 2012/13, 100% of full plans applications were decided within statutory timescales and all live construction sites in the borough have been successfully serviced as requested on a daily basis. The hard work of the service has been recognised through the comments on customer feedback forms, with 80% of customers highly satisfied with the manner in which the service has applied the Building Regulations. No customers returning feedback forms were dissatisfied with the service provided.

Housing

- **New Affordable Homes**

Since April this year 29 new affordable rented homes have been completed on the Grammerscroft estate in Millom. In August/September a further 24 will be completed at Jefferson Park in Whitehaven.

- **Affordability Ratio**

Research published by the National Housing Federation on 17 August shows that in England the ratio between average house prices and incomes had risen to 11.1 to 1 against 7.4 to 1 in 2001. The biggest change was in Copeland, where average prices had increased by 145% over the last 10 years while average incomes rose by only 5%. In 2001 the price to incomes ratio in Copeland was 2.6 to 1, rising to 6.1 to 1 in 2011.

- **Existing Stock**

The Community Energy Savings Scheme at Sandwith Ward, a partnership between British Gas, Home Group and specialist contractors, is in mid-programme. To date 174 mainly social rented homes have received a combination of new heating systems and cavity wall or external wall insulation. This is additional to the Cumbria Warm Homes Scheme in the Borough, which installs energy efficient measures in the private housing sector. On 23 July all Councillors were invited to a presentation of the findings of our 2011 private sector stock condition survey.

- **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)**

In 2011/12 we completed a record number of 100 DFGs and took an average of 9 weeks from receipt of referral to grant approval. In the first quarter of 2012/13 we have approved 35 grants, again at an average of 9 weeks from referral. We are receiving 14 referrals per month so far this year. If the trend continues we shall receive over 160 referrals and approve approximately 140 grants, representing another record volume.

- **Tenancy Strategy Consultation**

We have begun a consultation with all registered housing providers and other stakeholders on a draft tenancy strategy for Copeland, following approval by the Strategic Housing Panel. This is a new duty created by the Localism Act. Consultation closes at the end of September 2012 and the recommended strategy is expected to return to the meetings cycle in October. The statutory deadline for publication is in January 2013.

- **Homelessness Applications**

Decisions on homelessness applications were made in an average of 13 days in July 2012 against a target of 30 days inherited from Best Value performance indicators.

Environment and Sustainability Portfolio – Councillor Allan Holliday

Green Flags

As already been noted thanks are due to the work of community groups and our parks team as the borough's parks have yet again scored top marks in the Green Flag award scheme.

St Nicholas' Gardens in Whitehaven, Trinity Gardens in Whitehaven, Egremont Castle and Distington Crematorium have all been given a Green Flag. In addition, Trinity Gardens, St

Nicholas' Gardens and Egremont Castle have all kept their Green Heritage Site accreditation, which recognises high standards in the management and interpretation of sites of historic importance.

Sadly it has been reported the Government is no longer going to be financially supporting the awards organisers as it re-tenders the contract for the scheme. On the assumption any new scheme would have to be self-financing from entry fees it is unlikely that the Council will be entering the competition in future years as the pressure on our budgets is already severe.

County Council Schools Maintenance

Colleagues will be aware our Parks Department have hosted the County Council's Schools Grounds Maintenance team for some 18 months now. The arrangement came into place at short notice last year as the condition of schools grounds were deteriorating. Our in house team brought them back up to specification and subsequently entered into a short term agreement to host the former Amey grounds staff. The agreement then was extended off the early success with the intention of running through to the end of the grass cutting season in October this year. A little ahead of schedule County Council's Highways have been able to take the team back in-house and the transfer back has gone smoothly, a credit to our own staff.

Millom Cemetery

In September last year Executive received the Project Initiation Document (PID) for the proposed new Millom Cemetery. The report identified, at that time, the existing cemetery would be fully utilised within 3 years having 45 plots remaining. I'm afraid I have to report some 12 months later no suitable alternative land has been identified to provide for burials when the St George's site is complete. While the Council's Capital Programme includes a sum for site acquisition, testing and development signs are not encouraging that an alternative can be found. The land search is continuing to a wider radius than the area surrounding the Town but at this point I feel it advisable to let Council know about the issues we are facing in trying to identify suitable burial land.

Local Environmental Quality

A noticeable improvement in street cleanliness standards has been noted recently. Although national performance indicators are no longer required our waste team have continued to use a cut down version of the quarterly surveys of street cleanliness. The methodology originally developed by the Tidy Britain Group for Defra and previously used for National Indicator 195 is used to measure cleanliness on Copeland's publicly maintained streets, roads and footways. The latest survey carried out in June saw the best results in Copeland since surveys began in 2005. The survey measures two different aspects of cleanliness, the levels of litter such as cigarette ends or crisp packets that is normally cleaned up through manual litter picking, and detritus, which is the build-up of silt and other naturally occurring debris, which is normally cleaned up through mechanical sweeping. The score in effect is a measure of the quality of the Council's street cleansing service.

In the latest survey, over 98% of streets visited were litter free or had only minor amounts of litter on them while 92% had little or no detritus present. The combined score of 95% (the average of the two) exceeds the target of 90% in the current Council Plan-Implementation 2012-13. The improvement is put down to the revised team based approach now being taken with teams being responsible for specific areas.

Waste Re-routing Consultation

Members will be aware that in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010, we have been consulting over a period of time to get a full representation of views on the potential changes involved. This consultation has involved a representative sample of stakeholders, service users, individuals and organisations representing particular groups on a number of proposed changes to the waste collection service.

Since the consultation was launched at a special OSC meeting on 15 June, the Head of Neighbourhoods and members of the Waste team offered to attend meetings with a range of stakeholder groups. The aim has been to provide information on the current service and the proposed changes and to encouraging feedback.

Further events were planned for August along with a number of public drop-in sessions, which will be held in Egremont, Distington, Seascale, Whitehaven and Bootle. Again the aim of these sessions has been to encourage residents to respond to the consultation ensuring a broad range of views can be considered in the recommendations to be made to Executive next month. On-line responses have also been encouraged and a dedicated mail box (wasteconsultation@copeland.gov.uk) set up to receive electronic feedback.

At the time of writing, in mid-August, two formal group responses had been received together with 20 individual comments. Of these almost 50% of comments have related to garden waste collections, 22% to off-route collections, 8% to assisted collections and 5% to large bins. The remaining comments have been more general including suggestions on other services. That said however, consultation packs being sent to specific service users are due to be sent shortly and a significant response is anticipated from this.

The consultation closes tomorrow, the 7th September and officers will be analysing the results for presentation to OSC shortly followed by the Executive recommendations on 2 October.

Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio – Councillor Phil Greatorex

Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative

The Whitehaven THI is now in the development phase, having been given permission to start this process at the end of June. The tender process is underway for the professional team to support the development of the next round bid. The team will be appointed in September for submission of the stage 2 bid planned for March 2013. The THI partnership will begin meeting formally from September 2012.

Dilapidated Buildings

We have also successfully resolved the issue of the dilapidated bus depot in Whitehaven. This was a cross-department effort which after several years has finally seen the building demolished by the owners. The demolition has not been without incident, but once this site is cleared we will continue to pressure the owners to resolve the dilapidated bus station across the road.

Copeland Apprenticeship Initiative

The number of apprentices recruited to the Copeland Apprenticeship initiative has now reached capacity and currently stands at 62. The last few employers to join the Programme are: Lakes College, Montreal Primary, Gosforth Nursery, Bransty Primary, Action for Children, Waterfront & Threads Clothing.

The first 5 learners to complete their apprenticeship have all resulted in positive outcomes with three being offered contracts with their respective employer, one undertaking an enhanced apprenticeship and one moving on to commence study at University.

Some recent research with employers linked to the scheme has resulted in the following feedback: The majority of employers would speak highly of the scheme without being asked about it. 42% said that would be the case and 58% said they would speak highly of the scheme if they were asked about it or if the subject came up. Improved efficiency / productivity was found to be the main benefit to employers with 78% stating this. The other main benefit for employers was that through employing an apprentice was found to have a positive effect on rest of workforce with 72% highlighting this.

Copeland Work & Skills Partnership

Members of Copeland's Work & Skills Partnership are currently developing Initiatives such as Youth Volunteer Programme and Work Experience opportunities in a Workshop setting. Both initiatives are aimed at supporting young people towards the labour market. Copeland's Youth Engagement Officer has provided support in terms of consultation with local young people. Both proposals are at the stage of trying to securing funding.

Leisure Culture and Youth Portfolio – Councillor Hugh Branney

A second Free Weekend of Sport after the Olympics

The first free weekend of sport took place on 21st & 22nd July to make the start of the Olympic Games. There is a 2nd Free Weekend of Sport on 8th & 9th September during the Paralympics Closing ceremony to celebrate a summer of sport.

Whitehaven Sports Centre & Copeland swimming pool took part in the first free weekend with 384 participants taking part in the free activities on offer.

Millom Recreation Centre, Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project & Egremont RUFC have already confirmed their involvement for the 2nd Free weekend of sport.

Beacon Update

Up to the end of July, 2012, The Beacon has been visited by 22334 people this year and has an additional 12,500 enquiries and web users.

It has been a very busy few months of the year for the Learning Team, linked to the Olympics and torch visit to Whitehaven. The team have taught 3065 pupils by the end of July (their annual target is 4800).

Youth Engagement

The Copeland Youth Council have run a series of presentations on their priorities work with key organisations and individuals, including the local MP, the Copeland partnership and members of the Council.

The Youth Engagement Officer has been actively involved with the National Citizen Service this summer. Working with Young Cumbria and Inspira she has planned and facilitated several democracy workshops, educating young people about national and local decision makers, their responsibility to vote and how they can have their say through Copeland's youth council and forums. A total of 71 young people have taken part in the sessions as part of their residential week and everyone went away with a new insight into the importance of democracy and the importance of being involved.