

Executive Report to Full Council – 10 April 2014

Leader – Councillor Elaine Woodburn

Whitehaven – Albion Square development

Significant progress has been made on the construction of Albion Square, moving us closer to the reality of an additional 1,000 Sellafield staff being relocated to new office accommodation from the nuclear site from between September and November 2014. The move is part of a wider review of accommodation arrangements for Sellafield Ltd, which will result in a significant daily influx of people into the town creating substantial business opportunities for our retail, services and food and beverage sectors.

The Whitehaven Locality Partnership will be hosting an initial ‘fact sharing’ event for local businesses in Whitehaven proposed to take place in May in partnership with Copeland Borough Council, Sellafield Ltd, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), Nuclear Management Partners (NMP) and Britain’s Energy Coast (BEC). On the back of this the Council is working with the Centre for Leadership Performance on a programme of consultation with local businesses in Whitehaven, with the aim of providing a key event with a programme of tailored support and skills development workshops for local businesses.

The aim is to provide bespoke training and advice as required by Whitehaven businesses to help expand the local retail offer, filling gaps in the current provision to stimulate growth and investment and to meet the needs of the expanding local market.

Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives

The County Public Health Team ran two workshops in Copeland in March 2014 in response to the recently published obesity level data in the borough. The feedback at the session will move us forward with a re-instated and reshaped Copeland Healthy Weight Group linked to the Copeland Health and Wellbeing Forum. This group will oversee a Healthy Weight Action Plan which will draw from the good practice and shared learning and expand into new opportunities to enable Copeland residents to improve their health and wellbeing through healthy weight approaches and projects. The work of North Country Leisure through their contract with the Council and linked projects including Be Active and GP referral Initiative are important contributors to the existing good practice healthy weight interventions with residents. Be Active is well used by Copeland residents with 14,000 user throughput in over 30 local venues in the past 6 months. The GP “Exercise on Referral Copeland” scheme run by NCL has received 544 referrals over the first 18 months against a target of 350. Nearly 65% attended the first appointment and were admitted to the scheme. The scheme finishes the first three year contract this summer and is looking to negotiate a further GP referral scheme for the borough to build on the strong success of the current scheme.

Finance and HR Portfolio – Councillor Gillian Troughton

Finance

I attended the annual LGA Finance Conference where the local Government Minister, Brandon Lewis, made a presentation and answered questions.

A training session for members on Finance was relatively well attended with members learning about a wide range of aspects of budgeting and treasury management. In an earlier session members had learnt the principles of risk management and the Council's risk appetite. A session was also held on Audit; this focussed on the new audit charter and emphasised that audit is about more than finance. Key aspects are external controls, governance and risk.

Property

Copeland property was damaged during the winter storms and much out of hours work was put in by our staff to keep the public safe. There was damage to the swimming pool and sports centre roofs which were made safe at the time and are being repaired in conjunction with our insurers. There was minor damage to a number of other buildings and some fencing at minimal cost. At the request of Cumbria Constabulary, public access to the South Shore car park has now been removed; this is for public safety.

Individual Electoral Registration

The transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER) will start on 10 June, when all new applications for electoral registration will be individually based, rather than through the annual household canvass as at present.

The first electoral register under IER will be published in December 2014 and will be constructed by a data-matching exercise in July 2014. Data held in the current electoral register will be electronically matched with data in the Department of Work and Pensions database for all residents of voting age in the Borough. A "dry run" data match in September 2013 showed a match rate for Copeland of around 83%, a good result showing an accurate register. We are expecting the match rate in the "live" data match to be 85-90%.

Following data-matching, all **electors** (not households) who have been successfully matched will be confirmed as electors on the new register and will be notified of this by letter in July-August. Electors who have not been successfully matched will be asked to submit an invitation to register, which can be done on-line or in paper format. As an additional security measure, all new applications to register under IER will require an elector to provide their name, date of birth and national insurance number, which will be electronically checked against DWP records for new applications.

The Electoral Commission will be running a national publicity campaign starting in June to raise awareness of IER starting in June, and we will be supplementing this with our own

public engagement activities in the same period, for example through the website and social media.

Transition and Performance Portfolio – Councillor Allan Holliday

Policy and Transformation

Lean Project

The Revenues and Customer Services teams have been working together on a LEAN based Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) to examine working processes and ways to work more efficiently and effectively, which will result in improvements for our customers. The teams have made excellent progress and some quick win changes have been implemented.

Changes include:

- * Automated DWP payments saving staff time - equivalent to 2 weeks of cash officer time.
- * Procedure for cheques changed resulting in cheques being processed faster, not handled twice, and the work more evenly spread.
- * Call back script directed to duty officer on counter this will reduce customer waiting time and see a reduction in repeat customer contact
- * Additional information on the IVR/ATP (Interactive Voice Response/Automated Telephone Payment) to make payment options clearer reducing risk of payments being allocated incorrectly.
- * Orders for Council Tax payment cards are now raised and fulfilled in the contact center.

Civica Payments Upgrade

The Civica Payments upgrade included upgrading the current software and the introduction of 3 new chip and pin devices. The system is Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant; this means that the system will be more secure as well as meeting our legal and statutory obligations. The project has led to improved efficient and effective working practices and increased customer satisfaction.

Digitalisation of Crematorium and Cemeteries

The project is well underway to implement the administration and management IT solution to support process efficiencies through reduction in waste and duplication.

Technical installation has begun and procurement is underway with the chosen supplier. Terms and conditions are being negotiated.

We believe that there should be little perceived change by the customers (public/Funeral Directors) as the benefits are internal efficiencies. The exception being orders for the Book of Remembrance which can currently be placed and paid for in person at the Crematorium.

In future the customer will be able to do this via Copeland Direct or on-line.

Go live for the new system is expected summer 2014.

Community Planning Portfolio – Councillor George Clements

Housing

I am pleased to be able to tell you that we have used some of the HCA funding we were awarded to bring 6 empty properties back into use this quarter. This will provide much needed accommodation for some of our priority and non-priority need homeless residents. The number of referrals for Disabled Facilities Grants continues to increase, to date we have received 150 referrals this year. The provision of these grants means that people can continue to live in their own homes.

A new action plan is being developed for the final year of the Housing Strategy. Of the 38 actions for 2013/14 only two remain outstanding and work on these is progressing. The housing team have prevented 100 homeless cases this year; this is three times more than last year and has led to a reduction in the use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation.

Community Regeneration Portfolio – Councillor Hugh Branney

Copeland Work & Skills Partnership

Members of Copeland's Work & Skills Partnership are developing measures and projects to help address issues arising from Welfare Reform and support local access into the nuclear supply chain. In line with this, Partnership members and the Council have been engaging with a key local employer to look at potential direct interventions that can support local people currently out of work into employment by providing access to training support and job opportunities.

Copeland Borough Council has recently supported Inspira in their delivery of the Ready to Work scheme and their World of Work (WoW) day in March at the Whitehaven Academy.

Copeland Apprenticeship Scheme

The Copeland Apprenticeship Initiative has come to completion, having operated over a three year period, from March 2011 to 2014. The scheme was resourced by the Copeland Community Fund and Copeland Borough Council's Working Neighbourhood Fund and provided 74 employment and training opportunities to Copeland residents, covering a wide range of frameworks including ITQ, Construction, Retail, Health & Social Care, Business Administration, Customer Service, Hairdressing, Horticulture and Engineering. It also aimed to support an additional number of learners with basic skills/ skills for life (numeracy & literacy) to enable them to progress as they worked towards gaining entry requirements for

this and other apprenticeship frameworks being delivered across the Borough. The scheme attracted a full range of employers across Copeland (and Allerdale) including the key towns of Whitehaven, Workington, Cleator Moor, Egremont, Seascale and Millom. Total spend was £260,401.62.

The scheme targeted Copeland residents, with a particular emphasis on young people not in employment, education and training (NEET) and unemployed individuals up to 65 years. The scheme was delivered by Copeland Borough Council, Lakes College West Cumbria, Inspira and PHX Training.

The results from the initiative have been impressive. Of 74 individuals commencing apprenticeship frameworks, 50 individuals completed full apprentice frameworks at level 2/3 and have gained nationally recognised framework qualifications. Of these 42% secured employment with their current employer upon completion and a further 27% secured employment with other employers – this figure of 69% of individuals finding employment through this scheme far exceeds national benchmarks of 35% on other employability programmes. Employers included Cemac Construction, United Utilities, Sellafield and the NHS.

The success of the scheme has resulted in local and regional publicity and representatives were invited to undertake a presentation at the National Apprenticeships Annual Conference in November 2011 illustrating good practice and partnership working.

Community Regeneration Partnerships in Copeland's Localities

Our Community Regeneration Officers continue to work with their Partnerships on local priorities, which include environmental programmes, employment and skills development initiatives, focusing on our industrial estates, and developing our coastal and rural amenities. The Community Regeneration Partnerships played a key role in developing agenda and priorities for the Growth Conference in January and continue to champion initiatives to underpin Copeland's Growth Strategy and feed into the LEP.

Derelict and Dilapidated Buildings Programme

Our derelict and dilapidated buildings programme continues to target key eyesore buildings in the borough and maintains a rolling programme over the next 12 months. Actions continue on priority buildings, the most high profile at present being the current demolition of the former Bus Depot in Whitehaven.

Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

Since the last Full Council, our new THI Officer Jane Taylor, has started in post and hit the ground running, most recently issuing our first building grant offer to the Whitehaven Foyer.

Copeland Partnership Growth Conference

Following the high profile success of the Copeland Partnership Growth Conference in January, the Council are responding to requests from that day and organising a follow up event focusing on the Centre of Nuclear Excellence on 15th May 2014 at St Bees Management Centre.

Young Peoples Priorities/ Dream Placement

Our Youth Regeneration programme continues, with the early concentration focusing on inspiring and recruiting new young people into engaging with their local areas. We also were a Dream Placement host company as part of the Centre for Leadership and Performance's programme to inspire young people into leadership.

As part of the Young Peoples Alcohol misuse project, Young Cumbria has trained 12 peer educators via Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) education. These educators are now in the process of delivering sessions to young people at fourteen sites across the Borough. Attendance at each session averages 12-14 young people.

Environment Portfolio – Councillor Peter Kane

Regulators Code

The Council's Environmental Health Manager recently presented at a national best practice and shared learning event at the Westminster conference centre in London.

Copeland was invited to present at a "Bringing the New Regulators Code to Life" event on the Supporting Tourism in Cumbria project. The Cumbria project, led by Copeland received a Regulators Innovation for Growth grant in 2013 as a multi-agency project involving environmental health teams from all the district councils, Cumbria Trading Standards and Cumbria Fire and Rescue.

The project which included two successful business support events at Muncaster Castle and Stoneybeck Inn was selected to demonstrate how to ensure clear information, guidance and advice is available to help and support those they regulate and meet their responsibilities to comply.

The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) Regulators Code replaces the Regulators Compliance Code and from April 2014 will have statutory status. The Regulators Code takes a framework approach for regulators with a focus on supporting compliant business growth and engagement with those they regulate

Coastal defence repairs

A significant amount of work has been carried out to repair Copeland's coastal defences damaged by the severe weather in December and January. The repeat storms, some of

which have been assessed as being once in a lifetime events occurred over an 8 week period, causing damage to defences at Seascale, St Bees, Whitehaven and Parton.

Since the last severe weather event in early February, substantial repairs have been completed both at Seascale and at Whitehaven's North shore. Work is also underway to infill the large sink hole which appeared at the north end of St Bees promenade, which has prevented planned work being progressed at Rottington Beck.

The work carried out thus far has been enabled by funds being released from the coastal management reserve. However the Government has opened the Bellwin Scheme and officers are gathering information to submit a claim to reimburse these and other costs associated with the weather events. Costs of approximately £100,000 have been incurred by the Council in responding to weather related incidents, in dealing with sandbag requests, assessing structural damage to the Council's and other buildings, and the clearance of fallen trees and other debris. The Bellwin scheme normally only reimburses 85% of Council's costs above a threshold, which is set at 0.2% of council expenditure, in Copeland's case £18,208. On this occasion however the Government has agreed to fund 100% over the threshold and therefore a claim of approximately £80,000 will be submitted shortly.