

Executive Report to Full Council – 19 June 2014

Leader – Councillor Elaine Woodburn

Beacon Museum

The Museum re-opened to visitors during spring half term. Early feedback has been positive with visitor numbers and income from admissions in line with the business plan projections at this early stage. The Launch Day on 30th May was well received with Baroness Verma opening the new Sellafield Story exhibition and congratulating the Council and Sellafield on their collaboration and the opportunities it will offer. Professor Brian Cox delivered two talks on how science and engineering meet in investigating sub particles and the understanding of the start of the universe. We ran a competition for staff to win invites to the launch and meet Brian Cox – three staff winners took their families. The Beacon Collaborative Operating Model is fully in place with a Collaborative Steering Group managing and delivering against the business plan and an internal CBC project board monitoring against the risk register and business plan. We have successfully recruited a new Beacon Museum Director, Elizabeth Kwasnik, who will join us on 30th June, 2014.

Healthy Weight Plans for Copeland

A new Healthy Weight partnership group has been set up reporting to the Copeland Health and Wellbeing Forum to drive activities and target actions to reduce obesity levels in the borough. Their first focus is proposed as children aged 4 to 11. It is anticipated that alongside greater use of existing resources there will be a priority on getting better co-ordination of what is available along with some small additional resources to assist new projects to develop.

Copeland Community Fund

The Copeland Community Fund reached the £9million mark at the end of March 2014. This was celebrated at an event in April which also gave feedback on the recent evaluation of the first three years of the fund. The evaluation was positive with a few recommendations for improvement. The full document is available of the website.

As part of these recommendations the Board has introduced a clear operational strategy and a priority focus for the next two years. This focus is “Improving the wellbeing of Copeland Residents, by equipping them to be able to take advantage of opportunities, to move from dependence to independence.” A third of funding will be aimed at this focus over the next two years.

The Annual Report will be issued by the end of June 2014. A hard copy of the report will be available in the members room or available on request from the CCF Team. Electronic copies will be available on the CCF Website.

Copeland Partnership Conference

The latest Copeland Partnership conference, held on 15th May at the Civic Hall in Cleator Moor, attracted over 60 representatives from Partnership organisations across the Borough. The agenda focussed on one particular item, the Centre of Nuclear Excellence, or CoNE for short, and came about after the Partnership's Growth Conference held in January.

In the first part of the conference presentations were given by:

- Julie Betteridge, the Council's Head of Regeneration and Community who reminded everyone of the current economic conditions across the Borough .
- Pat Graham, the Council's Director for Economic Growth, summarised the background and purpose behind the CoNE as a means of generating growth, new job opportunities and attracting new investment.
- Kurt Canfield, Managing Director of local business Safety Critical Ltd, provided Partnership representatives with his views on how the CoNE will help stimulate inward investment and provide local businesses with opportunities to expand, diversify and ultimately grow.

The session concluded with Huw Morgan, who until very recently worked at the National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL), providing his perspective on the role of innovation and technology in the nuclear sector and how local partners including NNL were working together to develop opportunities to generate new commercial ideas and processes relevant to the sector.

The second part of the Conference provided participants to provide their views on what they had heard from the speakers and their perspectives on the opportunities presented by the CoNE for the benefit of local communities. The discussion and feedback from the workshop sessions provided a range of valuable issues relevant to specific groups or parts of the borough that need to be considered in taking forward the Centre of Nuclear Excellence in Copeland.

Finance and HR Portfolio – Councillor Gillian Troughton

New Democratic Services Manager

I am pleased to say that Lindsay Tomlinson will be joining us on 23 June and will take over as Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer on 26 June when Tim Capper retires. Lindsay joins us after a short period working for the Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group in Penrith, but has substantial experience in local authorities in East Anglia and latterly Lincolnshire, in both governance and electoral services roles. I am sure all Members will

welcome Lindsay and will look forward to working with her as we enter a period of challenge and change.

Transition and Performance Portfolio – Councillor Allan Holliday

Access Copeland

The Access Copeland project, which included a redesign of the reception area in the Copeland Centre, has been paused. This was necessary as new business processes are being designed for Benefits which may affect the way that the Customer Services staff work and the reception space is used. During a review of the detailed floor plans for the reception it was realised that these new processes needed to be better understood before remodelling the reception as there is a risk that the remodelled reception may not suit the new processes. Equally there is a potential opportunity that an appropriate redesign can be achieved at lower cost. The detailed proposals for this project will therefore be revisited at the beginning of August.

Multi-function devices

The Multi-function Device (MFD) project is almost complete (5/6/14). This project has replaced old printers with new machines capable of printing, copying and scanning. Staff can now print documents and collect them from any printer. Security and confidentiality are improved as the documents are released when the user types a password into the printer. There are therefore fewer uncollected documents and reduced waste. Improved printer reliability and contract terms will also reduce printing costs.

Individual Electoral Registration

Individual Electoral Registration (IER) was introduced in England and Wales on 10 June 2014 and will replace the existing household based elector registration process for the first IER electoral register to be published in December 2015.

The first IER register will be constructed using the transitional data-matching process with data held in the DWP database which I have described in previous reports to Council. Our data-match, known as Confirmation Live Run (CLR), will be on 3 July 2014, with results expected a few days later. As a result of CLR, all electors in Copeland will be allocated a RAG code as follows:

Red – meaning the elector's details do not match the DWP data and the elector will be required to make an individual application to register

Amber – meaning that the elector's details partially match the DWP data for that elector. We will use local data-matching protocols to attempt to match the missing data, which if

successful will result in the elector will be recoded as **G**. If local data-matching fails, the elector will be required to make an individual application to register

Green – meaning the elector’s details match the DWP data and the elector will be included on the new register without the need to make an individual application.

Our practice run for CLR in July 2013 resulted in 82.4% of electors being successfully matched, i.e. coded Green, a good result meaning an accurate register. Further work to improve the accuracy of the register since then means that our expectation is that the match rate in CLR itself will be at least 85%, perhaps as high as 90%.

Following CLR, starting in late July and running through August, all electors in Copeland will receive written notification of their status following data-matching. Electors coded Green will be informed that their details have been successfully matched and will be included in the new register without any need for further action. Electors coded Amber and Red will be informed that their details have not been matched and will be invited to submit individual applications to register.

Individual applications to register can be made in paper format or on-line, and Electoral Registration Officers have discretion to accept telephone applications also. Applicants will be required to provide their name, address, date of birth and national insurance number (NINO). The latter is a new requirement under IER as one of the principal aims of IER is to improve the integrity and security of registration, thus reducing the risk of electoral fraud. Each NINO will be electronically checked against DWP records using a secure connection.

The Electoral Services team have received training in the last 12 months on the requirements of IER, as have the Copeland Direct team in preparation for the additional enquiries from electors which we expect during the write-out in July and August.

Cabinet Office, the government department responsible for delivering IER, has made limited funding available to local authorities to support additional costs incurred as a result of IER implementation. The Council has received a total of £37,753 (2013/14 and 2014/15 combined), some of which has already been used to purchase scanners capable of processing IER forms, which are in A3 format.

The Electoral Commission requires all local authorities to have public engagement strategies in place to ensure hard to reach demographic groups are aware of IER and its implications. The Elections team are working with colleagues and partners to support our own strategy which will be rolled out to coincide with the Electoral Commission’s national publicity exercise in July and August.

I will make further progress reports to Council as IER is implemented through the remainder of 2014.

Next projects

The next areas of project activity will be to introduce better IT systems into Waste Services and to provide facilities for mobile staff working as this will be of general benefit as well as support the Accommodation Strategy.

Community Planning Portfolio – Councillor Geoff Garrity

Housing

I am pleased to be able to tell you that the conversion of an empty property in Millom is now complete and two bungalows are now ready for occupation and will be let as affordable accommodation for Copeland residents.

Copeland has been awarded funding from the No Second Night Out scheme; this funding will be used to develop a shared accommodation scheme in Copeland for single homeless residents who are not owed a duty under homelessness legislation.

The Housing Options Team continues to respond to high levels of customer demand as national policy starts to impact on Copeland households and homelessness prevention remains the biggest priority for the team. An appointment system has been introduced which ensures customer needs – including emergencies - are met in the most appropriate way

In April, a Senior Housing Options Advisor was appointed. They will be responsible for ensuring the Homelessness Strategy and its Action Plan continues to be delivered and meets customer need, reporting to Strategic Housing Panel. Alongside this, Customer Service Standards for clients are currently under review and will be updated.

Community Regeneration Portfolio – Councillor Hugh Branney

Leisure and Sport Improvements

Works started on the Copeland Pool Fitness Extension on 6th May 2014 and the official ‘sod cutting’ secured good media coverage in both the News and Star and the Whitehaven News. Phase 1 -the construction of new car parking to the front of the building is now complete. Phase 2, the main works, are now underway with the foundations being dug. Some unscheduled work has been necessary to reposition an external drain, but this has not caused any significant delay to date and the project is currently running on schedule. The Whitehaven Sports Centre has now installed £120,000 of new fitness equipment. Members and users of the Whitehaven Sports Centre will now be able to access wi fi and even do their shopping while on the treadmill. Other positive news includes the increase in children gymnastic sessions in response to the children on the waiting list for classes. There are now over 379 local children benefitting from gymnastic classes run by NCL. Classes at Millom are also very popular. A new spinning suite will be opened at the Whitehaven Sports Centre in July to meet the demand for more and flexible classes.

Environment Portfolio – Councillor Peter Kane

Bathing Water Quality and Short term pollution notification

With the aim of ensuring the best possible results for the four designated bathing water beaches in the Borough (St Bees, Seascale, Haverigg and Silecroft), Copeland is supporting the Environment Agency's (EA) short term pollution notification system. During the bathing water season of May to September the EA will text alert messages on a daily basis to warn of suspected poor water quality due to heavy rainfall in the area. Copeland as the bathing water controller will need to display a DO NOT SWIM notice by 10.00 hours that day and then remove the signs when the incident has passed.

High rainfall can result in significant amount of water runoff from fields increasing bacterial levels in the water. If samples are taken close to the time of the rainfall, bacterial levels will be high and the water quality poor. Providing public health arrangements to protect bathers are in place (the do not swim notices) samples which could be polluted, can be discounted therefore not affecting the overall classification of bathing waters.

Displaying the DO NOT SWIM notices means that any samples taken during the period that the notice is displayed can be discounted; replacement samples will be taken when the pollution incident is over. (Sampling is undertaken by the Environment Agency).

The bathing water season started on 15 May 2014 and to date (2 June 2014) and to date DO NOT SWIM notices have been displayed on two occasions.

To support the alert system DEFRA have offered an electronic sign for Seascale and this offer has been accepted. The electronic sign allows the daily text alert to be forwarded to a SIM number in the sign which is sited by the Information board at the beach and will then display the DO NOT SWIM in an electronic form for 1 day.

Memorial Safety Testing

Work has continued on Memorial Safety Testing within Whitehaven Cemetery. The team have now tested approximately 2000 individual memorials or headstones. To date around 6% of those tested have been unsafe. In the worst cases, headstones are laid down immediately to prevent them from falling over. For those not in imminent danger of falling grave owners, if they can be traced, are notified that the memorials need to be made safe.