

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 31 MARCH 2009

Effective Leadership - Councillor Elaine Woodburn – Leader

Councillor Allan Holliday – Deputy Leader

Closure of Accounts

Accountancy Services have continued to work with the Audit Commission during the audit of the 2007/08 Accounts and the post-audit amendments in relation to the 2006/07 Accounts, and their work, at the time of writing, is substantially complete. The Audit Commission are in the process of drafting the Annual Governance Reports for 2006/07 and 2007/08. The reports will be received by the Audit Committee at the re-arranged meeting of 27th March where the District Auditor will provide his opinion on the Council's Accounts for the two years.

Improvements to current arrangements are being put in place in readiness for the preparation of Accounts 2008/09. The Closure of Accounts plan for 2008/09 has been prepared and agreed by Corporate Team. The Manager's pack of returns to accompany the plan has been distributed and the first briefing session has been delivered, the remainder will be completed over the next fortnight. The accounting ledger is being revised and work has commenced on the implementation of the Fixed Asset Register module. The process which will be carried out over several weeks also represents forward planning for the move towards the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards across Local Authorities during 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Term Banking Services Contract

Executive agreed in October to the delegation of responsibilities to officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to progress negotiations for the renewal of banking services (i.e. current account banking). Only one tender was received and in principal negotiations have been completed. Legal processes to complete the contract have commenced

West Cumberland Hospital

At last the decision was finally taken on the preferred location of the new hospital, and that is what we are getting a new hospital with regards to service provision. Putting aside the building itself, as I am sure we will be consulted on the actual design proposals and will have representatives on the scrutiny group overseeing the project, what we need to concentrate on is service provision. The Copeland community signed up to the Closer to Home service proposals and we need to ensure this is delivered. To

aid this an early meeting is being sought with the Chief Executive of the Acute Trust. As soon as the date is agreed I will let all members know.

Nuclear New Build

It is envisaged, at the time of writing, that numerous nominated nuclear new build possible sites will have been submitted to Government by the closing date of 31st March. These will include sites around the Sellafield site itself and the RWE nominations at Braystones and Kirkstanton.

The submissions will include

Nominator

Letter of Support from a Capable Nuclear Power Operator (CNPO)

Identify/Describe size of Site and Boundaries

Raise stakeholder awareness: specifically demonstrate informed Regional Development Agencies, local landowners/tenants, local Site Stakeholder Group, local communities (advertising in local newspapers) and local authorities

Describe process followed in selecting the site and reasons

Demonstrate the site is credible for the deployment of new nuclear power stations before the end of 2025

The nominated sites will form a national nuclear policy statement that will be used alongside sustainability appraisals with the desire that by Spring 2010 the planning process can start. Consequently if everything stacks up then we could see nuclear new build start in 2013.

Lillyhall Landfill Site Very Low Level Nuclear (VLLW) Waste Project

An application will shortly be submitted to the Environment Agency by Waste Recycling Group (Lillyhall landfill owners) for an authorisation to dispose of high volume VLLW arising from the nuclear sector. This application is NOT a planning application therefore it is solely in the hands of the Environment Agency.

The Government want alternative disposal routes for High volume VLLW which do not need engineered disposal at sites such as the LLWR near Drigg, therefore this application is in line with Government policy, BUT that does not mean that the proposed site is publically acceptable. Government policy also refers to the proximity principle which in essence means that wastes should be disposed of as close to where they are being generated.

Allerdale and ourselves have met with the surrounding parish councils to discuss the application, it was unanimous by all those present that this application should not be accepted, and they will respond to the EA stating this.

I will be taking Copeland Borough Council's proposed response to the Nuclear Working Group for agreement.

There is a wider issue outside of this application, one that CBC will need to consider at the appropriate time, in that we know that work is already ongoing at the Keekle quarry site with regards to monitoring water flows etc to enable evidence to be produced which could mean that this site is also identified as a site for VLLW.

The Council needs to formulate a policy on this issue something I will be instigating through the Nuclear Working Group.

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely

The second meeting of the Copeland shadow siting partnership met in February where it was discussed and agreed that the partnership would become the West Cumbria shadow siting partnership due to the fact Allerdale had formally made an Expression of Interest. The meeting included presentations from the NDA on repository design and operation for information, an initial work programme was drafted and a discussion held on what communication was needed.

A steering group made up of representatives from CBC, West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group, Union, CALC and Allerdale Borough Council are meeting in between the full partnership meeting to implement actions agreed at the full partnership meeting.

A communication/engagement/information programme will shortly be produced to ensure communities have access to information as and when they need it.

Achieving Transformation Councillor Cath Giel – Deputy Leader

Councillor Norman Williams – Portfolio Holder

Whitehaven Rugby League Football Club

Members have followed with interest the situation at the Whitehaven Rugby League Football Club and have asked for a progress report since the Authority took its place on the newly formed Board of Directors on 15/01/08. The new Board is now in place and meets on a fortnightly basis with a programme of activities established to ensure that Governance arrangements and business planning is carried out to a high standard.

To date the Board have:-

- Agreed individual board member responsibilities for key areas including financial management, marketing, administration and rugby development.
- Interviewed a number of applicants for the post of General Manager and appointed Nigel Beatty to the post with effect from 10 March 2009.
- Negotiated with Sellafeld Ltd for a management secondee to work at the club for 6 months – it is anticipated that the secondee will be in place mid April.
- Formalised relationships with the rugby football league to ensure that club activities are compliant with the rules of the Governing Body
- Submitted a draft expression of interest to the RLF Facilities Trust for grant aid towards improvements to facilities at the club. A further more detailed submission will be made which will be considered by the RFL in May 2009
- Established a training programme for the Board members and staff so that they have a full understanding and knowledge of Health and Safety requirements.
- Formalised relationships with volunteer workers at the club particularly with those involved in hosting and developing sponsors.
- Agreed a protocol for Board Members to act as Match Day Directors on a rota basis.
- Agreed a payment plan to ensure that Creditor payments are being made on a regular basis with historic outstanding debts being brought up to date.

- The Company is working within its agreed Bank overdraft facility.
- Initiated arrangements to strengthen the financial management systems thus ensuring that all Income and Expenditure is properly accounted for.

In addition the Board are working on:-

- The Accounts for the Year Ended 31 December 2008.
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- Preparing a Business/Financial Plan for 2009. This will be provided to CBC, the Rugby Football League and Barclays Bank in the near future.
- In preparation for the shareholders AGM which will take place at a date to be set in April 2009.

Whitehaven Public Realm Priority Projects

Members should recall that the overall strategy for the development of Whitehaven Town Centre is based on creating clusters of development focused on new public spaces of high quality. The aim is to reinforce and strengthen the existing or emerging character of these areas to create distinctive urban 'quarters'. In an attempt to deliver this strategy we are progressing three key projects:

- Whitehaven Civic Quarter – the public engagement and exhibition that was showing in the Civic Hall has now finished. The detailed design has been completed and a planning application has been submitted. An advert has been placed in both local and national press for a contractor for the works. It is hoped they will commence works in June 2009.
- Mount Pleasant – This is the most visible link between the Harbour and the Haig Zone of the Whitehaven Coast. The proposed public realm investment of £433,000 will deliver a high quality accessible area incorporating new lighting, surfacing and arts spaces. Contractors Gillespies have produced three concept options which will be part of the public exhibition to be held in The Beacon starting on 19th March 2009.
- The Conservation Management Plan for Whitehaven – This plan was used to inform the submitted bid for the Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), which is being finalised during March 2009. Consultation activities on the Whitehaven Plan are scheduled to take place during May and June. The Heritage Lottery Fund will be announcing successful stage one THI bids in April 2009.

North West Community Coalfields Programme (Phase 2)

The North West Development Agency have approved the NWCCRP Phase 2 Commissioning Framework and agreed that the programme can commission activity prior to the approval of the programme. Each Local Authority (including Copeland and Allerdale) now need to identify to the Accountable Body (Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council) which activity will be commissioned in the first round. We are currently working on activity briefs which will be ready with supporting documentation by the 1 April 2009.

Kells Environmental Improvements

The contractor for this project was approved at the Exec meeting on the 10 March 2009. The contract has been awarded to RH Irving and works will commence in April 2009.

Planning Policy

Progress continues on the production of an Issues and Options document for the Council's LDF. It is a wide ranging document covering all the main areas of policy in the Core Strategy and the Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and is intended to go out to public consultation during May/June 2009.

As part of the process meetings have been held with the National Park Authority, Allerdale BC and Cumbria CC to discuss cross boundary issues. There has also been a session with the West Cumbria LSP's Living Environment Group. Meetings of the Council's Members' and Officers LDF Working Groups are scheduled during April to finalise the document for release.

Work also continues on the overall evidence base for the LDF. The West Cumbria Retail Study has been completed and will be available shortly on the Council's web-site. There has been some delay in the production of the Strategic Housing Assessments on markets and land availability. This has been due to problems with county-wide population forecasts (now solved) and with the number of sites notified. They are now likely to be completed later in the summer – I will keep members appraised as things progress.

National Park Partnership

The Council was represented at the first meeting of the Partnership's Farming and Land Management Sub Group this month. The Group will assist production of the next Park Management Plan. The Park's 'Big Plan' is being developed with the Partnership to set

out core actions and targets under its vision of being “an inspirational example of sustainable development in action”.

Promoting Prosperity - Deputy Leader – Councillor George Clements

Councillor Geoff Blackwell – Portfolio Holder

Councillor Hugh Branney – Portfolio Holder

Environmental Cleansing Services – Further Development

The Waste Team have been working with the Process Improvement Team since last summer reviewing all the current activities carried out by the Environmental Cleansing team. The Cleansing service has not been reviewed for a considerable time and the aim is to update the service ensuring it is fit for current purpose as well as operating in the most cost effective manner.

The project team are making use of GIS technology, which is expected to result in improved information being available on service standards both for residents and for Copeland Direct. GIS mapping is also being used to identify fly-tipping 'hot-spots' and other cleansing related problem areas so that resources can be allocated appropriately.

Having gathered and evaluated a significant amount of data on how the service is currently delivered, there will be an area-based approach introduced to cleansing activities. The changed service, which will be introduced in April 2009 involves teams being responsible for litter picking, fly tipping, recycling sites, toilet cleaning and some litter bins in their own area. The area based teams will be supported by the three large mechanical sweepers that will work across the whole Borough. As is consistent with the latest Defra guidelines, the emphasis will be on targeting resources to keep streets clean, not on how often they're cleaned.

Free Swimming Update

Members will recall that, from the 1st April 2009, people over the age of 60 years of age will be able to swim for free at Copeland Swimming Pool (Whitehaven) and also the Wyndham Swimming Pool (Egremont).

Swimming has a number of benefits for over 60's such as improving fitness and well being, reducing the risk of injuries, helping to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, and stress reduction.

Free access applies to any standard swimming session, but not to sessions which are coached such as swimming lessons or aqua-aerobics.

It was hoped that this scheme could be extended to those aged 16 years and under, but unfortunately the grant allocation was insufficient and not enough support has been secured from partner agencies to enable delivery within Copeland. Officers have been working with the Home Group, who were able to offer some funding, but negotiations with the Cumbria PCT could not be concluded in time to commence the scheme and confirm Copeland's participation. Copeland's allocation from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for under 16's access was £33,185, which was subsequently increased to £40,047 when some Local Authorities did not express an interest. The minimum required for Copeland Pool and Wyndham Swimming Pool would have been £58,743, leaving a shortfall of £18,696 which is simply not available from existing Copeland revenue budgets.

Cleator Moor Sport and Physical Activity Development

Leisure Copeland (the charitable trust that manages the Council's leisure facilities) in partnership with Copeland's Cultural Services team have been able to secure funding for the Cleator Moor Sport and Physical Activity Development project for the next three years (until 2012).

This project has been achieved through the development of the Copeland Sports and Physical Activity Alliance. Funding has been drawn from Sport England Community Investment Fund, Leisure Copeland and the Learning and Skills Council. The total project cost is £111,730.00.

The project will employ a Physical Activity Coach for three years focussing on delivery to currently inactive adults with a particular emphasis on women's participation. Accompanying this coach will be an apprentice who will follow a coaching programme to achieve a level 2 NVQ.

Together they will deliver across a range of activities which will include multisports, dance, aerobics / movement and walking. These sessions will be delivered in community venues in and around the Cleator Moor area.

The benefits of this project are as follows:

- Increase the number of residents doing 3 X 30 minutes physical activity per week, the minimum recommended to maintain good health.
- Motivate inactive residents to become active.
- Contribute to improving the health and well being of residents, thus addressing issues such as obesity, cardiac care and decreasing osteoporosis.
- Widen access to sport and physical activity for local priority groups.
- Strengthen local clubs by creating a strong vibrant local activity base.
- Economic regeneration; this project will create 2 new jobs for the area.

CCTV – Police Operative Training

Members will be aware that the council recently installed a state of the art CCTV system, which monitors Whitehaven, Cleator Moor, Frizington, Egremont and Millom.

As part of the CCTV provision, monitoring and recording equipment was installed into the local police stations and the Allerdale CCTV monitoring station. Following the installation CCTV operative training was provided and delivered by ADT to police staff operating at each police station.

Concerns have been recently raised by Members and Officers about the ongoing training arrangements and a decrease in effectiveness over time due to personnel moving on. It was found that a number of operatives and police officers originally trained in the use of the CCTV equipment have relocated within the police service. As a result, and in discussion with the Police, further CCTV operative training will be provided to all current police CCTV operatives including a process to ensure that future replacement operatives are provided with cascade training to ensure sustained monitoring.

The training will be undertaken by the equipment provider ADT and is expected to be completed by end of April 2009.

Healthy and Safe Eating – Millom Project

The Council's Environmental Health Department is working in partnership with Millom Children's Centre to deliver a Food Standards Agency (FSA) funded project designed to promote healthy and safe eating. The project is progressing well and will be evaluated in May 2009, early feedback is very positive and some of the key successes are:

- Cookery sessions for dads and kids and families have built on the success of the popular take and bake sessions run last year. These sessions will continue as they provide an enjoyable way to improve and learn new skills.
- A Young Chefs Club (14 – 16+ years) is well attended and five of the Young Chefs are completing an open college network course on food and nutrition providing them with a chance to obtain a useful qualification.
- Starter kits with basic cookery equipment are provided to young people who are moving out to live on their own to encourage and support them to carry on cooking at home.

The experience gained will be used to develop projects in the South Whitehaven area working in partnership with Primary Care Trust and South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative.

Pitt Review – Member Awareness Training Arrangements

In response to interest and enquires about the Pitt Review which was reported on last month, a training programme for members is being developed. The training will aim to provide information on the Pitt Review recommendations and the responsibilities of different agencies and the impact on Copeland. The training will be provided to small groups to encourage discussion and will provide details on the future Flood and Water Bill which is expected to be published for consultation soon.

Details of the training will be circulated in April 2009.

Landlords Forum

The first landlords forum was held on Friday 6 March and was well attended by landlords from the private sector and letting agents. It was disappointing that only one social landlord was represented. The question and answer session with housing benefit staff was very helpful, my thanks to those staff who attended. An accreditation scheme was discussed and the landlords raised many questions as to the benefits of such a scheme, as a result a working group is to be established which will consist of landlords and officers, a report will be taken to the Strategic Housing Panel later in the year.

Disabled Facilities Grants

I am delighted to be able to tell you that the time taken to approve a Disabled Facilities Grant has been reduced from 33 weeks (2007/08) to 23 weeks (2008/09), I am sure we will see an even bigger improvement during the next twelve months now we have a full team in place.

Housing Service Standards

I am also pleased to announce that the first draft of a comprehensive set of the Council's housing service standards have been produced for consultation with members, customers and all other stakeholders. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the next meeting of the Strategic Housing Panel in the first instance.