

## **Report from Overview and Scrutiny**

**ITEM  
FULL 030707**

Lead Members: Cllr Mrs A Bradshaw; Mrs Y Clarkson  
P Connolly; Mrs W Metherell

Lead Officer: Tim Capper  
Report Author: Neil White

April to June 2007

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

### **1. Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

The Cumbria County Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met on 25 April in Carlisle and was attended by Councillor Anne Bradshaw. The meeting considered two key issues:

#### **(i) The Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check 2006-7**

The Healthcare Commission, which is the national inspection body for healthcare organisations, carries out an annual assessment of the performance of NHS organisations against a set of core standards. The NHS organisations are invited to assess their own performance against these core standards and submit a declaration.

As part of the Healthcare Commission's procedures for checking out the self-assessments, Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees were invited to comment on aspects of performance against the core standards, based on their scrutiny experience.

The Committee considered and made a number of comments on aspects of the performance of the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust, North Cumbria Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Cumbria Partnership Trust, Cumbria Primary Care Trust and University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust against the core standards for submission to the Healthcare Commission.

#### **(ii) Short Breaks Services for Children with Disabilities**

The Committee considered the comments of the Task Group on the joint Cumbria PCT/ Cumbria County Council consultation on Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities.

The Committee had set up a joint scrutiny Task and Finish Group (joint with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel) to examine the forthcoming joint

consultation on changes to short breaks services for children with disabilities and comment on the proposals within the timescale of the consultation period.

At the centre of the consultation was a proposal to provide a wider choice of short breaks for children with disabilities, to be funded by the release of resources currently tied up in residential facilities at Orton Lea, Carlisle, and Seacroft, St. Bees, which would close.

The Task Group had raised strong concerns about the timescale of the closures as they would not allow time for alternative options to be developed and put in place. It asked the Primary Care Trust and the County Council to urgently develop a business plan to set how they would continue to develop a short breaks service, to involve staff from Seacroft and Orton Lea in this work, and to keep Seacroft open until detailed proposals can be brought forward for consultation.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Task group.

## **2. Community Call For Action**

OSC Young People and Healthy Communities received a presentation from the Scrutiny Officer on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny process. The Committee noted the intention in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper to extend the remit of the Community Call for Action and requested that they receive further training on the implications of this for the Council.

## **3. Mental Health**

OSC Young People and Healthy Communities considered that there had been little public scrutiny of the outcomes of the decision to close mental health wards in Whitehaven by the North Cumbria NHS Trust. It agreed that a review of this issue be scoped out.

## **4. Green Spaces Strategy**

OSC Young People and Healthy Communities considered the update on the work done on the Green Spaces Strategy and The Play Strategy and agreed that an update report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

## **5. No Smoking Policy**

OSC Young People and Healthy Communities considered a draft No Smoking Policy as a result of the introduction of the Health Act 2006 which would require the Council as an employer to change its arrangements for employees smoking at work.

The Committee agreed with the proposed wording of the policy subject to:

(A) The second paragraph of implementation being changed to reflect all the specially designated places where smoking would be permitted, and

(B) The information in the help to stop smoking paragraph being put onto the bottom of the new No Smoking Signs.

## **6. West Cumbria Strategic Master Plan**

OSC Economic Development and Enterprise received a presentation from the Chief Executive on the West Cumbria Strategic Master Plan.

The Chief Executive advised that a presentation on the Master Plan had been recently been given to the Prime Minister and final approval for the plan would be considered at the West Cumbria Strategic Forum at the end of June. It was anticipated that once final approval had been given there would be an allocation of government resources for the proposals in the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn.

The Committee noted that the planning policies followed by the Council would need to be altered to enable the proposals in the Master Plan to be fully and successfully carried out. The Committee agreed that a report should be submitted to a future meeting of the Planning Panel detailing the possible changes and how they would be developed through the lifetime of the master plan.

The Committee further noted that there would need to be a period of public consultation on the proposals once Government approval had been given for the plan and funding allocated. This consultation would be best undertaken by the Council and the Committee requested that they be kept informed on the key meetings and decisions taken on the master plan.

The Committee considered that the success of the master plan would require the close cooperation of key partners some of which were not subject to public scrutiny. The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to question these partners as the master plan was being progressed.

## **7. Planning Appeals**

OSC Economic Development and Enterprise considered the question of appeals taken against the Council's planning decisions. It agreed to set up a task and finish group to look at how this issue was being dealt with by the Council. The group should consist of 5 members with the membership being made up of Councillors D Moore, Anne Bradshaw and N Clarkson with an invitation to join the group being made to Cllr D Banks and another Councillor from the other overview and scrutiny committees.

The Committee further considered that following this review it would be useful to undertake a review of the enforcement of conditions attached to planning decisions.

## **8. Enforcement Services Performance Update**

OSC Safer and Stronger Communities considered the performance of the Council's enforcement unit over the first 8 weeks of the 2007/08 financial year.

The Committee noted in detail the performance of the enforcement of on-street and off street car parking; littering/fly tipping; dog control; household/trade waste and abandoned vehicles.

The Committee felt that as this was a key area for the Council regular monitoring of performance against the projected targets should be undertaken by members and agreed that a sub group be established to do this. The membership of the sub group should consist of Councillors J Kane, E Eastwood, G Garrity and J Jackson.

## **9. Green Waste Collections**

OSC Safer and Stronger Communities noted that the Council had received funding from Defra in 2003 for an alternate week green waste collection scheme to enable the Council to improve its household waste recycling rate. To maximise the effect of the collection scheme additional brown bins for green waste were distributed to residents as they were required.

The Committee further noted that this scheme had been extended in 2006 to a further 2200 properties. Following the experience gained from the existing collections and bearing in mind the additional time required to empty green waste bins properties had been issued with only one brown bin for their green waste.

The Committee agreed that the Executive should be asked to correct the imbalance in the service for green waste collections and to release potential capacity to extend the service to new properties a limit of one brown bin per property should be introduced from now on. Residents with large gardens should be encouraged to compost at home.

The Committee noted that the Executive had previously agreed that non major strategy or policy decisions with respect to waste management and decision-making on all other matters with respect to joint waste work, including the implementation of policies, be devolved to the Portfolio Holder or Substitute and the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services.

## **10. Energy Review - Scoping**

OSC Safer and Stronger Communities noted that the Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2006 had agreed to undertake an energy policy review in 2006-07 and formed a sub group to undertake the review.

The Committee agreed that an energy review sub group should be reconstituted and consist of Councillors J Jackson, A Carroll, M Woodburn and G Garrity.

The Committee considered a scoping exercise into how the sub group could undertake the review. It agreed that the Sub Group's terms of reference should be to:

- 1) explore ways in which the Council can encourage communities to consider alternative energy use, energy savings and efficiency, and to make recommendations to the Council as to how it can lead by example;
- 2) reconsider the Affordable Warmth Strategy in the light of findings under para 1; and
- 3) assist Overview and Scrutiny to form a view on all energy matters as appropriate.

### **11. Community Legal Service**

OSC Safer and Stronger Communities noted that in 2004, a small sub-group of Overview and Scrutiny Members had considered the appropriate level of grant-funding for the Whitehaven and Millom Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB) and for the Community Law Centre.

The Committee further noted that In order to allow suitable time for assessment of the organisations' funding requirements for 2008-09 the Social Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2007 had agreed that a sub group be selected from Members of OSC Social Well-Being and OSC Performance and Resources be set up to consider funding requirements for Community Legal Services for 2008-09 but this would take place following May 2007.

The Committee agreed that a Community Legal Service Sub Group be constituted with membership consisting of Councillors Mrs W Metherell, W Southward and J Park. It further agreed that the sub group's terms of reference should be to consider funding requirements for Community Legal Services for 2008-09 and beyond.

### **12. Training**

OSC Management considered what further training the committee needed following the training it had received at its last meeting from the North West Employers Organisation on its proposed role and function.

The Committee felt that it would be beneficial to have a half day joint training session with the Executive as well as regular meetings with the Executive. The purpose of the training and the meetings would be to get a better understanding of each other roles as well as improving the working relationship and efficiency of both bodies. One outcome from the training could be the production of a working protocol between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

The Committee further felt that one of the key areas to come out of the previous training was the need to have a better understanding and relationship with the

Council's senior officers. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to organise a half day joint training session with the Council's senior officers as well as regular meetings with the officers.