

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 6 NOVEMBER 2007

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Effective Leadership – Councillor Elaine Woodburn - Leader **Councillor Allan Holliday – Deputy Leader**

Digital Television.

As members will I am sure be aware the first phase of the switchover from Analogue to Digital took place on 17th October when BBC2 became available only as a Digital signal. So far the reports and the media coverage of this part of the switchover have been positive, and people generally seemed to understand what was going on. The second phase takes place on 14th November when the remaining channels switch to the digital format. Currently people that have not made arrangements for viewing digital television can still see some channels. However from Wednesday 14 November; people who have not made any arrangements will be left without any television signal.

We have worked closely with Digital TV, Local Community and Voluntary Groups, Registered Social Landlords, the Whitehaven News, Parish Councils, Credit Unions, the County Council, Local and National Television retailers, OFCOM, CAPITA and the BBC to try to ensure that the switchover takes place as smoothly as possible for the people of Copeland and that people are not unduly disadvantaged by the process. The main issues arising from phase one have been around the need to retune set top boxes and there was some delay within the help scheme as a result of the postal strike. The world's press did descend on Whitehaven with national news and television from this country and also from France and Japan. This brought some good publicity for Copeland and the weather was fine on the day offering some excellent photo opportunities. There has been a significant effort by all parties to ensure a successful transition and the first phase has been completed as smoothly as could be expected. We will continue to work with interested parties throughout and beyond the final switchover until the whole process has been satisfactorily concluded.

Nuclear New Build Consultation

As colleagues will see the Council's response to the Government's New Nuclear Build consultation has been submitted after ratification from the Nuclear Working Group. The highlights as previously reported were –

- Yes to nuclear power as part of a balanced energy mix
- Yes to siting new nuclear power stations at Sellafield
- Yes the Council want to see the continuation of reprocessing

Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

As colleagues will recall the Government agreed to the formation of a new Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoWRM) and recently the membership has been announced. The reconstituted Committee will play a key role in scrutinising Government's and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's (NDA) plans for the long term management, including interim storage and disposal, of radioactive waste. A list of membership of the new committee can be made available.

As we know the Government, in conjunction with the devolved administrations of Wales and Northern Ireland, is currently consulting on how implementation of geological disposal of higher activity radioactive waste could be taken forward and the Council will shortly be making its response to this. The response will be ratified through the Nuclear Working Group and sent out to all Members for information.

Leader's Planned Absence

In the near future I will be absent from the Council for a number of months to undergo and recover from major surgery. I am taking this opportunity to formally notify Council of arrangements that will be implemented in my absence.

Deputy Leader	Responsibilities
Councillor Allan Holliday	Resource Planning Working Group Executive Nuclear Issues Cumbria Strategic Partnership Cumbria Strategic Partnership Executive
Councillor Cath Giel	Cumbria Vision Energy Coast Masterplan Leaders Group
Councillor George Clements	Cumbria Local Authority Strategic Board (CLASB) Joint Leaders Group Local Strategic Partnership

It is my intention to return to the Council as soon as possible, but in the meantime day to day issues will be covered by Councillor Allan Holliday.

Communications

Copeland's new communications officer, Leila Cox, has now started at Copeland, and has already been working on a number of different projects, particularly with employees in Leisure and Environmental Services. Leila's appointment will allow the communications team to work much more proactively with Members, officers and with the media to better inform people about what Copeland Borough Council does. The communications team has worked on a number of major projects recently such as the reopening of The Beacon and the first stage of the digital switchover. Anyone who wishes to discuss any of these can contact Ian or Leila.

Launch of the Sustainable Communities Strategy for West Cumbria

On 2 November the West Cumbria Strategic Forum held a major forum for all its partners and stakeholders at the Civic Hall in Whitehaven. While at the time of writing this event has not taken place it provides the opportunity to launch the new Sustainable Communities Strategy for West Cumbria. Copeland Borough Council agreed the final version at its last full Council meeting, and together with its local authority partners, Allerdale Borough Council and Cumbria County Council, set the long term vision for the future of West Cumbria in print for the whole community to read.

Achieving Transformation - Councillor Cath Giel Deputy Leader
Councillor Norman Williams – Portfolio Holder
Councillor Tim Knowles – Portfolio Holder

North West Community Coalfields Programme (Phase 2 – 2008 – 2011)

Expressions of Interest for potential projects in Copeland have been received and are in the first stage of being appraised. Regular meetings with Allerdale continue to take place to ensure a properly coordinated West Cumbrian approach in order to ensure the maximum benefit to the area.

Coastal Fringe/Haig Site

The deadline for tender submission is 12 noon on Friday 2 November with contractor interviews taking place on the 9 November. Representatives from all partners have been invited to be involved in the interviewing process. The programme to start the works has slightly slipped and has been rescheduled for the 10 December.

Members may recall a presentation on this scheme was delivered on 25th September in the Bainbridge Room with representation from Copeland Borough Council, Land Restoration Trust, National Trust and Entec UK Limited.

Saltom Pit

Some short term emergency works are scheduled to take place at Saltom Pit in November. These have been specified in a report from a structural engineer, commissioned through ENTEC by the National Trust. It is proposed that a series of medium/longer term works will take place once a further Structural Report is produced. We expect this to be funded through English Heritage and West Lakes Renaissance.

Hotel Development

A developer has engaged architects to work on full design and costings for Pears House and Hotel projects. The developers have been advised of the need to demonstrate that full and effective negotiations have taken place, and that all other design alternatives have been pursued before Copeland BC can consider compulsory acquisition.

Market Town Initiative (MTI) Succession Plans

Millom and Egremont are currently preparing for life after NWDA funding. Both are preparing plans for agreement by CBC to focus on downscaled delivery plans. NWDA is undertaking a general review of the MTI initiative and as of 19 October was unable to give a definitive view as to what future it saw for them. West Lakes Renaissance has been approached to determine

its ability to play a role in sustaining the MTIs whilst the NWDA Review is concluded. Consideration is also being given to the future funding of Regen North East Copeland and parallel discussions are continuing with WLR and the County Council.

Egremont Market Town Initiative

Environment Cumbria is currently carrying out detailed design work on the cycling and leisure walk routes as well as the car park and town centre walk. Tendering of the various parts of this work will now take place early in November.

The award of two further building grants in Egremont will result in six 'out of use' buildings being brought back into use in the Town.

Pow Beck Valley SPD

The Local Development Framework Working Party met on 15 November to look at objections and other representations received in July/August when the draft was on consultation deposit. The Working Party's recommendations for changes to the Pow Beck document are on the Council agenda today along with an overall recommendation to formally adopt the document and its companion Sustainability Appraisal.

Local Development Scheme

The Working Party also considered changes to the Council's Local Development Scheme as a result of comments made by Government Office on the draft produced earlier this year. This is a document which sets out the programme of work for our planning policy documents over the next three years and explains how they fit together. Progress against this programme may well influence the size of any future Planning Delivery Grant we receive so it is an important tool in the overall context.

Pride Awards

The 2007 Pride Awards took which recognise business excellence, and of which Copeland is a sponsor, took place recently

The Awards reward businesses who are contributing to their local community as well as to the wider economy. From independent retailers to accommodation providers all do so much to make Copeland the place it is. Copeland Borough Council is proud to be part of the awards.

Coastal Fringe Projects

Mount Pleasant

Funding applications are currently being drafted to take forward one of two concept design options for Mount Pleasant which will create linkages with the harbour and coastal fringe public realm works. The aim is to create a high quality low maintenance public space.

Town Centre Projects

Town Centre Street Furniture/Visitor Signage

The objective of this piece of work is to create a consistent visual identity, to complement and reinforce the architectural character of the town. Concept design options have been agreed and are currently being costed.

Car Parking Strategy

Work has commenced on a car parking strategy for Whitehaven with the prime objective to develop an overarching strategy for the future provision of both off street and on street parking within Whitehaven Town Centre. The work will advise a comprehensive approach to addressing current parking demands and advise on potential future requirements in light of the Whitehaven Regeneration Programme priorities and traffic management issues.

Promoting Prosperity – Councillor George Clements Deputy Leader
Councillor Geoff Blackwell - Portfolio Holder
Councillor Hugh Branney - Portfolio Holder

Housing

The Audit Commission has indicated that it will be undertaking a Strategic Housing Inspection in the early new year. This will assess how well we are fulfilling our statutory and other obligations as a Housing Authority. As Members know there are serious capacity issues at present with vacancies and a long term sickness absence so there will be difficulties to face. We are undertaking an initial self assessment and I will report further on the process in due course.

Furness and West Cumbria Housing Market Renewal

Despite a slow start in Copeland, in South Whitehaven the current HMR programme for Furness and West Cumbria is likely to deliver projects and spend to the level proposed at the outset of the two year programme. Work is now underway on the business plan for the coming three years. In line with the delivery so far and the aim and objectives of the programme, informed by an updated market analysis, the forward programme will be split between Barrow receiving 55% of resources, Allerdale and Copeland 41% with 4% running costs. We are assuming that Regional Housing Board funding is flat lined at 2007/8 levels throughout the 3 years – these were Barrow (£3.2m) Allerdale (£2.1m) and Copeland (£1.6m). It is proposed that the Copeland element be towards the end of the period due to the considerable preparatory work required, the slow progress so far and the issues arising from the difficulty in delivering the Council's housing service. It is proposed that the focus continue to be on South Whitehaven.

community Safety

Up until now the funding for Community Safety, directed at the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, has been ring-fenced for that activity. From April 2008 the funding will be part of the LAA pooled funding so competing against other priorities. In addition the indicative funding is being reduced which all leads to the conclusion of a tighter budget round in coming years for community safety. The CDRP has been going through a review to improve performance and at the same time looking at how some of the running costs of the partnership can be mainstreamed by the two Councils. The results of this exercise will be known shortly.

Christmas Lights

The Christmas lights installation programme is on schedule in all areas. Switch on dates are – Millom, Cleator Moor and Cleator on Friday 23 November; Egremont on Sunday 25 November; Whitehaven on Sunday 2 December

CCTV

Obtaining all the required permissions from property owners, etc has caused a few minor problems requiring some adjustments to the original programme.

Installation of the system in Egremont is essentially complete with just some minor works required before the new system is commissioned and the old equipment can be removed. Millom has had to be moved back in the schedule due to delays in gaining permission from the Police Estates Office to work in the station until they have completed checks of the proposed cable runs against their asbestos register (clearance has already been given for the other three police stations). All other permissions from property owners in Millom are essentially in place, so when clearance is obtained from the Estates Office it should only take one week to complete installation in the town.

Cleator Moor has been brought forward as a result of the Millom delay and installation there will be completed by the end of October. It is anticipated work will start in Whitehaven as soon as Millom is finished.

Marchon Site Seminars

Dave Chapple, Arts Development Officer, arranged and led a number of seminars to explore the opportunities available at the former Marchon chemical works site in Whitehaven. This development builds on the successful South Whitehaven artists' residency which focussed work around the ex-industrial heritage of the area. The Marchon site is nearing the final stages of demolition and clearance, and will be available as a public space in late 2008 / early 2009.

In partnership with the Land Restoration Trust, the National Trust and regeneration partners, options for the site are starting to be explored. A wide range of organisations have been represented in the seminars including Copeland Homes, the Environment Agency, the North West Development Agency, West Lakes Renaissance and local community leaders. A workshop on site has been held, with input received from landscape artists, environmental engineers, and other artists such as sculptors.

Step into Sport – Young People and Sports Volunteering.

Sports Development Officers are working with colleagues in Cumbria Sport and Allerdale BC to organise a West Cumbrian Step into Sport conference. This conference will take place on the 1st November 2007 at Moorclose Leisure Centre. Briefings for Copeland sports clubs have been well attended and ten clubs are welcoming the opportunity to get more young people involved. To support the build up to this event, all schools sixth form assemblies have been attended and a presentation delivered to encourage participation and raise awareness of Step into Sport. This approach has been

extremely successful, with Copeland numbers up from 12 last year to 115 this year.

Whitehaven Civic Hall Frontage.

A study has commenced into the options for re-development of this important town centre area, looking at simplifying the streetscape to remove clutter and making the area more attractive to Copeland residents and visitors. Links to the Whitehaven Civic Hall itself and the Whitehaven Library are being considered to attract people into the venues through the use of innovative lighting and design. This study is being developed in partnership with Copeland's Regeneration Department and West Lakes Renaissance.

A major review of the Whitehaven Civic Hall aimed at developing a three year improvement plan has just been completed by Leisure Copeland (the charitable trust that manages the facility on behalf of Copeland Borough Council) in conjunction with the Council. In addition to supporting the need to look at the frontage, other initiatives are commencing such as the development of studio space to develop skills amongst young musicians.

Dog Fouling Fines

I'm sure that we all agree dog owners allowing their dogs to foul and not clean up afterwards is unacceptable and antisocial, as well as being an illegal act which should not go unchallenged.

I am able to report to Council that our Enforcement team have been very proactive in addressing acts of dog fouling so far this year. With the support and good information provided by residents across the borough, a total of 26 dog fouling penalty notices were issued in the first half of this financial year. The fines cost the perpetrators collectively a sum in excess of £1,300.

Playgrounds BIG Lottery

Following approval at the Executive, our Parks Development Officer submitted the Council's BIG Lottery play application on the 7th September 2007. Since then she has been interviewed twice as part of the application evaluation process, both being very positive. The evaluation officer for the BIG Lottery has now completed his report, which has been put forward to the board in November for a decision. It is anticipated we will be informed prior to Christmas if the application has been successful. I will keep Council informed.

EXECUTIVE DECISION FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

None