

EXECUTIVE REPORT

LEADER'S REPORT

COUNCILLOR MISS E WOODBURN – PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Customer Services

As colleagues will know the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) launched a Local government Reputations project late last year. We were the first Council in Cumbria to sign up to this project which aims to improve the reputation of Local Councils. There are now over 200 Local Authorities signed up.

When I last reported our progress I showed how we were performing well in the categories which were seen as priority areas, these being Cleaner, Safer, Greener and Communications, so it is pleasing to report we are continuing to make excellent progress, including:-

- The award of 5 Green flags throughout Copeland delivered in partnership through Friends Group and Copeland Borough Council
- The production and delivery of the A to Z of services
- The additional production and delivery of Copeland Matters

Customer First

Customer First was set up a few years ago to try and improve customer satisfaction with the Council. We knew that like many councils, satisfaction with our services had declined, but what we didn't know was why this was the case. To solve this problem we did the obvious thing, and asked customers why their satisfaction had declined, and how it could be improved.

We then used this information to produce a plan of actions to address areas of concern. We further focused on three main areas which our customers identified as important:

- Waste, recycling and cleanliness
- Customer services and communications, and
- Leisure

We have been meeting regularly and monitoring these plans to ensure that we are making the appropriate improvements. We have also continued to consult with our customers to ensure that we are doing what they want us to. One way we have been doing this is by holding a series of challenge group meetings with members of the public, Councillors, employees, service users and non users to get feedback from a wide range of people. The group has met three times and will be meeting again in October.

It is pleasing to report that out of the 16 key actions identified, 14 have been completed. These included:-

- Improved parking facilities at the Cleator Moor Bowling Centre
- Improved external appearance of the Whitehaven Civic Hall
- We now offer black box lids at a discounted price
- Made our website interactive
- Began to collect cans through the doorstep collection scheme
- Used the Clean and Green Team to clean up public areas
- Improved recycling bring sites
- Published an A to Z of services

This is not a finite list as the needs of our customers are constantly changing but Customer First is proving an excellent way of finding out what they want and then doing all we can to help fulfil that need. We also have to accept that we don't always get things right but mistakes are only mistakes if we don't learn from them, and this is sometimes much more important, and something we are doing.

Benefits Fraud Results 1 April 2006 To Date

We have a statutory duty to respond to any allegation of fraud and in doing this our Fraud Section have had some very good results from their recent investigations, which have included:

2 Cautions have been given.

1 Administrative Penalty [a fine] has been given (in addition to the one below).

4 claimants have been taken to Court, and the results were as follows:

- 1 asked for an Administrative Penalty instead of prosecution and we agreed to this
- 1 received 40 hours community punishment order
- 1 received 80 hours community punishment order
- 1 received a custodial sentence of 30 days, of which she must serve 15.

Nuclear Issues

Community Prospectus

As Colleagues will recall I reported that we were leading on the writing of a community prospectus which will set out the community's expectations of the new site operator of the Low Level Waste Repository. This document will be supplementary to the invitation to tender and will be seen by all those interested in running the site. The document will also set out what we can offer as a community and how we can help the operator fulfil their socio economic responsibilities. The document will be going out to consultation shortly and I would encourage all to make any comments.

National Stakeholder Group – Waste Issues Group

As I have previously reported the latest meeting of the Waste Issues Group was held here in Copeland and consisted of a tour of the Sellafield and LLW site followed by meetings. This gave us the opportunity to demonstrate that there is more to Copeland than just Sellafield as well as emphasising the impact the nuclear industry has on us.

The meeting discussed numerous issues including looking in more detail at the proposed criteria the NDA will be following when it comes to considering options for the interim storage of ILW. More details will follow when they have agreed on the criteria consultation timescale.

The meeting also raised the topic of site end states, something which the West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group will be discussing in more detail and considering how this can be communicated and consulted upon throughout Copeland.

British Nuclear Group Sale

The recent communication with regard to the sale of BNG has raised some issues which are concerning to us as the local community. We were led to believe that the Government's preferred option was to sell the company as a whole but it seems a decision has been made which means the site will be sold off piece by piece. This move has been carried out with no consultation with anybody and could mean us having many operators for different parts of the site. The NDA is also taking decisions which will affect the number of operators by agreeing to the removal of the Calder Hall Magnox site into a Northern package for tendering, again resulting in a different operator for a part of the site.

These proposed changes will affect our relationship/s with the operator/s and possibly the effectiveness of the operation of the site. I believe it is something we need to air our concerns about both to Government, BNG and the NDA. Over the years we have established a good working relationship with the site operator, something which is vital if local confidence is to be retained. These changes might jeopardise this position.

Executive Meetings

The Executive has been discussing the frequency of their meetings and after further discussions with the Chief Executive have agreed to change from an average three week cycle to a four week cycle for the remainder of the municipal year. This will allow more time for proper consultation between authors and portfolio holders, as at present consultation is often rushed. It will also allow time for quality control of the reports by Corporate Team. It is expected that the volume of business per Executive meeting will rise as a result of these changes but it is envisaged that with the extra time for consultation and quality checking this will not necessarily have a negative impact on the meetings.

Recognising that this change will affect the timing of the OSC Chairs meetings, their meetings have been changed accordingly after consultation with them.

Digital UK

As you know the Border TV region is to be the first in the UK to switch over to all-digital television broadcasting. This will be done in stages – starting in the Whitehaven area (defined as nearly all of Copeland) in late 2007. The region will go completely digital in the second quarter of 2009.

The Council will be working with partners and Digital to make this a success and to ensure that our community are informed and supported through the changeover period.

I have already met with Digital TV's regional manager and arranged a series of meetings including the briefing prior to the Council meeting. There will also be a public meeting in Whitehaven Civic Hall on 21st September 2006. Key partners who will be involved with us include Parish Councils, Copeland Homes, Age Concern, Disability Forum etc. I will of course keep members informed of progress

2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Review of the Opening Hours for The Copeland Centre

Date of Decision: 15 August 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0068

Context:

Approval was given to delay the opening of The Copeland Centre on Wednesdays to 10.00 am to allow for training for front line staff. This report reviews effectiveness after 3 months.

Decision

That the Council offices at The Copeland Centre continue to open to the public at 10.00 hours on Wednesday mornings.

Subject: Capital Programme Monitoring 2005/06

Date of Decision: 15 August 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0072

Context:

This is a progress report that advises Members of expenditure to the end of June 2006, and any amendments needed to the Capital Programme for 2006/07.

Decision

That

- a) **the spend to date and project managers comments be noted;**
- b) **the previously Executive approved amendments to the Capital Programme as detailed in the report be noted;**
- c) **the balance and previously approved movements on the Major Projects Fund be noted.**

Subject: Revenue Monitoring Report for the 3-Month Period 1 April to 30 June

Date of Decision: 15 August 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0073

Context:

This report informs Members in detail of the variations in actual and expected revenue based expenditure and income over or under £10,000 of budget, for the 3 month period 1st April to 30th June 2006.

Decision

That the report be noted

Subject: Employment Initiatives Fund

Date of Decision: 15 August 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0074

Context:

To advise members of BNG Community Fund allocation to support Town Centre Programmes and Projects

Decision

That

- 1: the receipt of the funding and the criteria for use be noted; and**
- 2: the allocation between towns be approved.**

Subject: Replacement of Financial Management Systems

Date of Decision: 15 August 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0078

Context:

This report outlines the proposals for replacing the Council's current Financial Management Systems

Decision

That subject to noting the appendix to be considered in part two of the agenda the contract for the supply of a new Financial Management System be awarded to Consilium.

Subject: Replacement of FMS System

Date of Decision: 15 August 2006

Decision Reference: EXE/06/0080

Context:

To note additional information relating to Agenda item 20

Decision

That the additional information be noted and the decision taken at EXE/06/0078 be confirmed