

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 14 AUGUST 2007

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Effective Leadership – Cllr Elaine Woodburn - Leader

Cllr Allan Holliday – Deputy Leader

Sustainable Communities Strategy for West Cumbria

The West Cumbria Strategic Partnership has been working on a new Sustainable Communities Strategy (formerly known as the Community Strategy). This has taken some time in development to ensure that all relevant information is available before publication. So recent additions such as the Energy Coast Masterplan are reflected in the draft document.

A period of consultation on an earlier draft starting in February 2007 produced a high number of comments and updates from stakeholders, many of which have been incorporated. Consultation is continuing with organisations which asked after the deadline to have the opportunity to comment.

The timescale for publishing the Sustainable Communities Strategy is now set for early November. The final draft document is available on the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership website (www.westcumbrialive.com).

Copeland Borough Council members will be invited to a meeting in September to consider the draft and propose any further amendments. The Council will then formally consider the Strategy for adoption on 25 September.

Digital Television Switchover

The plans for the switchover of television in the Copeland area from analogue to digital later this year are now well advanced. Prior to the Council meeting a presentation has been arranged by Digital UK and others to bring Members up to speed and answer any questions they may have.

We continue to work with Digital UK through a local stakeholder group which we facilitate. The group was joined at its meeting on 1st August by James Purnell the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. This visit followed on from a House of Commons All Party Digital TV Switchover Group meeting on Wednesday 4 July which was devoted to digital TV switchover in Copeland. Representatives of our stakeholder group attended and gave evidence and answered questions. Copeland Borough Council was represented at that meeting.

We have recently expanded the make up of the stakeholder group to include representatives of local Credit Unions and also more recently the contractor who has been appointed to run the help scheme for the Copeland area. Digital UK is continuing to raise knowledge levels by a range of means and have had road shows in a number of villages and supermarkets.

The help scheme contractor opened their information centre at 72 King Street on 13th July 2007 and will be available to demonstrate equipment and give advice. There is a small training area there to take people through the elements of switchover and to demonstrate how to connect up a set top box etc. The centre is platform and retailer neutral.

Age Concern is continuing to coordinate the activity of the voluntary sector and there has been a steady stream of volunteers but more are needed. Drop in sessions are being organised and they are continuing to work with residents who are not entirely covered under the help scheme.

Test signals are continuing to be transmitted to identify those people and equipment which will be affected and aerial checkers are available to check whether existing aerals are good enough to receive the new digital signal in advance of switchover.

Better Government for Cumbria

As Colleagues know the Cumbria County Council bid for unitary status was rejected, the reason being that a single unitary authority for Cumbria would not be capable of providing effective leadership given the particular circumstances of Cumbria. The Secretary of State particularly noted that Cumbria is geographically unique and the East / West communication links are poor. She recognised the significant differences in history and economy between coastal parts of the County, the rural southern area and the northern part of the County, and concluded that on balance there was not a reasonable likelihood of the proposal achieving the outcomes specified by the criterion.

Though we welcomed the rejection of the County Council bid, there is still a challenge in front of us in that we need to improve working together through shared services. Government made it very clear when making the unitary announcement that improvements would still be expected and that plans would need to be compiled that demonstrated how this could be achieved.

An initial meeting was held with all the Leaders and Chief Executives of the Councils and the LDNP to discuss how we move forward. There was a recognition by all in attendance that a change was still needed but now it could be progressed on an equal footing. There is an initial first meeting on the 22nd August where draft plans will be initiated.

New Nuclear Power

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (formerly DTi) represented by Mark Higson, Director of Nuclear held a meeting in Copeland as part of their consultation on the Future of new Nuclear Power.

The meeting comprised of presentations on:-

- (1) - Nuclear consultation
- (2) - Nuclear new build
- (3) - Nuclear safety and waste

(1) – This part of the meeting focussed on the process Government is taking to ensure full public consultation. It was made very clear that Government already had a “preliminary view” on the future role of nuclear power which was that they believe that it is in the public’s interest to give energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations, but they had not yet formally decided.

(2) This presentation focussed on the challenges ahead with regard to providing stable and affordable energy mix for the UK. The two key issues are :-

- The problem of climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions
- Energy security

It was made clear that there is clear evidence that the contribution nuclear power could make to tackle climate change is potentially substantial.

(3) - This part of the meeting concentrated on nuclear safety and waste. The main safety issues raised were :-

- Proliferation
- Exposure to radioactive materials
- Transport of materials
- Terrorism threat

The Government during the consultation is asking whether the creation of new nuclear waste can be ethically justified. It is clear that a balance needs to be struck between the creation of new nuclear waste against the risk of failing to meet the energy challenges and the socio economic consequences of that impact. Mark Higson made it very clear that Government has already taken a preliminary view that the balance of ethical considerations does not require ruling out the option of new nuclear power. It was also made clear that the Government intends to introduce legislation to ensure the energy companies set aside funds to cover the costs of future waste management and decommissioning.

In conclusion the meeting was extremely positive and Mark Higson left with the clear message that if the benefits outweighed the detriments Copeland would welcome nuclear new build.

Meeting the Energy Challenge

Copeland Borough Council is working with Cumbria County Council, Allerdale Borough Council, NWDA, Westlakes Renaissance, Cumbria Vision and Invest in Cumbria to examine how nuclear new build might be facilitated at Sellafield. A tendering process has been carried out to appoint expert help who will be tasked to:-

- Develop a technical, economic and planning review related to the current energy review
- Build the business case for siting of new nuclear build in West Cumbria
- Based on the outcome of the Government's decision in the Autumn on new nuclear build, provide a strategy for influencing any siting decision in West Cumbria

This work will be carried out in stages with an initial report ready to underpin our response to Government on "The Future of Nuclear Power". There is a detailed timetable available on request.

The Secretary of State's Visit

The Secretary of State for DBERR, the Rt Hon John Hutton MP, visited the Sellafield site recently and local key stakeholders were given the opportunity to meet him for an informal chat. It was a further opportunity to highlight the importance of nuclear to Copeland. The Secretary of State is very knowledgeable about both the nuclear industry and Sellafield and will be a great asset alongside Jamie Reed MP in helping Copeland realise its ambition of new nuclear power.

Final Accounts 2006/07

In depth training was given to members of the Audit Committee to enable them to consider and approve the final accounts for 2006/07 on 26th June 2007. Work has been completed on the production of the final accounts which are now subject to external audit. Any issues arising will be presented back to the Audit Committee in September. I would like to congratulate accountancy who has met the deadline date of completion of accounts by the end of June.

Procurement

The EPIc (Effective Procurement in Cumbria) group continues to meet on a monthly basis to develop the shared service. Current activities with the North West Centre of Excellence include sustainability to consider local suppliers and the University of Lancaster has undertaken a survey to assist this process. Tenders for electricity are to be obtained shortly with the expectation of small reductions in charges.

The IDeA marketplace “punch in” facility is planned to start in September with completion in December subject to the software provider confirming programme dates.

Achieving Transformation

Cllr Cath Giel Deputy Leader

Cllr Norman Williams

Cllr Tim Knowles

Corporate Plan

The Council successfully launched its new five-year Corporate Plan on 22 June 2007. The delivery of the Corporate Plan is being overseen within the services through the service plans and an overall view of progress will be reported to Executive on a quarterly basis. The first of these is due at Executive on 4 September.

To ensure that successful delivery of the Corporate Plan is maintained across the organisation the Chief Executive has set up three Corporate Management Boards, each taking responsibility for one of the main themes:

- Effective Leadership,
- Achieving Transformation and
- Promoting Prosperity.

These Boards will be chaired by the Chief Executive or a Strategic Director and will comprise representatives of the Council's services and main partnerships. The Boards are particularly looking for links with the main strategies and partnership programmes in which the Council participates, and at resourcing and changes of policy that could impact on how the plan is achieved.

Performance Improvement

CoValent was installed in 2006 and is the Council's performance management IT system. It is a very powerful system that will go from strength to strength as we include additional items for monitoring. We have a programme of additional plans and management tools to add over the coming months e.g.: risk registers, follow-up improvement plans and individual action plans further enhancing the ability and accuracy of the systems information.

Equality and Diversity

The Council has embarked on a programme of Equality Impact Assessments of five priority services starting with Cultural Services and Human Resources. It is intended that these services will complete their Assessments by the end of this municipal year.

The Assessment allows the service to examine how its current policies and practices impact on various groups in the community: for example different faiths, carers or people with disabilities. Should the Assessments identify any gaps in service provision an Action Plan will be developed for implementation.

Pay and Grading Review

The pilot phase of the Council's job evaluation process was successfully concluded and reviewed in May 2007. The main programme has now started and is proceeding well. It covers all posts except for those whose terms and conditions are governed by the National Joint Committees for Chief Officers and for Craft Workers.

Employees and managers are meeting with the job analyst to conduct the information-gathering interview. It is expected that this part of the job evaluation project will be complete by the end of December 2007.

Regeneration

Considerable progress is being made in reinforcing the partnership approach to the regeneration of Whitehaven. The establishment of a formal partnership agreement with Westlakes Renaissance has led to significant progress on the Pow Beck project. It is hoped that Executive will endorse a similar partnership approach relating to Whitehaven Town Centre at their meeting on 7th August 2007.

With partnerships in mind, it is with regret that I inform this Council of the probable loss of approximately £2M worth of grant funding for the Leconfield Industrial Estate development scheme. Processes adopted by a key partner, the North West Regional Development Agency, have jeopardized the future of this scheme. An urgent review is underway.

Whitehaven Car Parking Strategy

Work has been undertaken to produce a comprehensive traffic management strategy that will address current car parking demands and advise on potential future requirements in light of Whitehaven Regeneration Programme.

Coastal Fringe/Haig Site

The next stage of the Coastal Fringe project is now underway. The main aspect of this work includes preparing tender documentation, appointing contractors and submitting planning applications. It is hoped that physical works will start on site in October 2007.

Saltom Pit

A structural survey of Saltom Pit has been completed and a meeting between the National Trust, Copeland Borough Council and ENTEC will be convened to agree a programme of works (including emergency works) to be undertaken to secure the building. The National Trust intends to submit

funding bids to English Heritage and West Lakes Renaissance for the main works by the end of August 2007.

Haig Mining Museum

Haig Mining Museum has been advised by Heritage Lottery Fund to reduce their bid to less than £2m so that it can be approved at a regional rather than national level. The building design is being reviewed to reduce the cost of capital works accordingly and the Museum hope to submit the bid by the 1st September 2007 provided discussions with the Council about the revenue funding shortfall within the business plan can be resolved.

Evolutive

Work is now progressing with the online public search facility for the vacant sites and premises service and we hope that this will be completed by the end of August. Carlisle City Council is now up and running and a meeting has been arranged with them later this month to plan a joint launch for September once the main holiday period is over. The launch will target commercial agents, local businesses and other interested parties to inform them about the service and how it could benefit them.

Community Response Fund

The Community Response Fund provides financial support for re-training to enable people who have been made redundant to access employment. To date the Panel has received 159 applications, 55 were awarded funding, 8 businesses have been created and 50 people have found full time employment. Employers are contacted as soon as redundancy situations are announced and a flyer and new application form has recently been produced to improve processes and help get the message out to employees.

Planning Policy

Four documents are to be assessed over the next few weeks:

Pow Beck Development Brief SPD (Supplementary Planning Document)

This is a key document to assist implementation of the regeneration project in the Pow Beck Valley. The draft version is "on deposit" for public consultation until the 16 August for interested parties to submit representations. These will be reported to the Local Development Framework Working Party at the end of the month and to Full Council in September with a view to formal adoption.

Wind Energy SPD

This is a joint piece of work with other Cumbrian Authorities to provide guidance to potential wind energy developers, particularly on landscape assessment. The Executive considered a draft version in September last year

and an objection was submitted. An amended, final draft has been produced for all the partner authorities to formally adopt and this will be reported to Full Council in September following consideration by the LDF Working Party at the end of August.

Statement of Community Involvement

Members will recall that the Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will involve the community in the production of local development documents and in the consideration of planning applications. The draft SCI was amended following consideration of representations received and submitted to the Secretary of State on 31 May 2007. Representations were invited on the Submission Draft SCI between 31 May and 13 July 2007 and a schedule of these plus the Council's responses are now with the Planning Inspectorate who will decide if further changes will have to be made.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

This is an important item in the Council's evidence base for preparing new planning documents and dealing with planning applications. It is a technical document that examines the various flood risk across the Borough and in accordance with government guidance it has been prepared in consultation with the Environment Agency. Considerable cost savings were made by partnering with 4 other Cumbrian authorities to have the SFRAs prepared under one contract. The document does not require a formal approval as such but the LDF Working Party will "sign off" receipt at the end of the month before it is posted on the Council's web site for information.

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

Smoking Ban - Enforcement

Members will be aware that on the 1st July 2007, the Government introduced a new law to make virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in England smoke free. In light of this legislation many smokers are now smoking in the open environment. It is an offence to drop cigarette butts on the ground, and a total of 8 Fixed Penalty Notices have been handed out by enforcement officers for this offence since the legislation came into force.

Enforcement Partnership

Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria Constabulary have teamed up to launch a unique enforcement partnership for the streets of Whitehaven. As part of the new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (CNEA) powers, Copeland Council has empowered seven of Cumbria Constabulary's Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to give fixed penalty notices for a series of environmental nuisance offences such as littering, graffiti, dog fouling and fly posting. Copeland Borough Council's Enforcement team will also continue to issue fixed penalty notices for environmental nuisance offences.

Clean and Green

There is a significant amount of activity underway at the moment mainly in the South Whitehaven area but also further afield to ensure residents are provided with the right information and advice to manage their waste. There are currently 3 Recycling Rangers working door to door, handing out information packs and providing advice and guidance on waste minimisation, re-use and recycling. Over 3000 homes in South Whitehaven have received a visit from one of the rangers during July. This work is being carried out as part of two separate but integrated projects, the Cleaner Safer Greener funded South Whitehaven Project and the WRAP funded Cumbria Recycling Campaign.

Cultural Services

Summer Holiday activities for young people and their families

This year Copeland Borough Council will offer its young people and families the widest range of summer activities to date. The activities will be delivered by Copeland Borough Council and partner organisations including Leisure Copeland. The summer activities scheme has been promoted to young people and their families via a high quality brochure detailing all of the sports and arts activities that are happening over the summer. 10, 000 brochures have been distributed throughout Copeland to schools, community groups and other family oriented venues. The brochure also details nearly thirty venues where the activities will be delivered across the borough.

Summer Sports Leaders employed by Copeland Borough Council's Cultural Services Department will deliver sports activities to all areas of Copeland throughout the summer holiday period. The Summer Sports Leaders were selected by a practical interview held at St Begh's school, with feedback obtained from the children that participated in the sessions.

An addition to the summer activities scheme this year is free minibus transportation for organised groups, funded by a £6,000 non-recurring budget bid designed to break down barriers to access and get more young people involved. The minibus transport is being provided in conjunction with North Cumbria Community Transport and will be available on weekdays throughout the summer holidays.

Pathways to Art

Copeland and Allerdale Borough Councils are working in partnership with Job Centre Plus delivering 'Pathways to Art' which will offer Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers as well as the broader community the opportunity to take part in a series of short and exciting art projects. The aim is to develop communication skills and methods of self expression, with the sessions involving participants exploring personal and community issues through participation in arts workshops.

Pathways to Art is funded by the Arts Council and Allerdale and Copeland Borough Council's arts services with additional funding applications submitted to the Neighbourhood Management Boards of South Whitehaven and South Workington. These Boards are keen to support this project as it provides vital 'first rung' learning opportunities for some of the most hard to reach and vulnerable people in society. As a part of this project links will be built with a range of services and support agencies in West Cumbria to ensure that the good work achieved within the project is built on.

Parks and Gardens

This year the Parks have been successful in retaining the existing Green Flag sites of Distington Hall Crematorium, St Nicholas Gardens, Trinity Gardens and Egremont Castle and Gardens.

On top of this we have retained the Green Heritage Flag award for Egremont Castle & Gardens. However this year we have gained the Green Heritage Award for both Trinity Gardens and St Nicholas Gardens.

Playgrounds

A play consultant has been appointed to review the existing childrens play area and teen spaces strategy and update it in line with current recommendations. The consultant will also be working with the Parks Development Officer to submit the BIG Lottery play application for September 12th 2007. Consultation is taking place with children and useful feedback is been gained to feed into the strategy.

Beck Green Nursery

This year so far the nursery has produced 100% of the summer bedding plants in peat free compost to such a high standard that many community groups and town/parish councils have requested further floral provision. This brings in an income of approximately £1,000 to the nursery. Carlisle City Council also received provision from ourselves and has asked if we would be interested in tendering for the supply of all their floral provision.

There has also been a tour of the nursery with two community groups to demonstrate the work we do there and the quality of the stock produced.

Trainees

After the successful interview process for three full time appointments our previous trainees are now full time members of our parks workforce. Following these appointments three new gardener/arborist trainees have now been taken on to continue the trainee programme which involves on and off the job training, academic training and external experience with another organisation.

EXECUTIVE DECISION FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Subject: 2 Tier Waste Collections

Date of Decision: 10 July 2007

Decision Reference: EXE/07/0034

Context: To consider a recommendation for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Green Waste.

During consideration of this item Members asked that the relevant Deputy Leader be included in the implementation of policies

Decision

That a) only one brown bin per property be allowed in future for Green Waste Collections;

b) those properties who currently have more than one bin be allowed to keep the extra bin(s); and

c) the decision of the Executive at its meeting on 14 March 2006 that major strategy or policy decisions with respect to waste management remain subject to the agreement of the Executive, but that decision-making on all other matters with respect to joint waste work, be noted; and

Council be recommended that: -

d) the implementation of policies, be devolved to the relevant Deputy Leader, the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services