

Executive Report**HEALTH & DIVERSITY PORTFOLIO****COUNCILLOR GEOFF BLACKWELL – PORTFOLIO HOLDER****MARTIN JEPSON – LEAD OFFICER****1. KEY ISSUES – PROGRESS REPORT****1.1 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

My brief as Portfolio Holder for Health and Diversity includes Social Inclusion, an integral part of the Council's plans to promote the needs of everyone in community. Over the next year I shall be working to increase awareness of problems arising from race, disability, gender and age to take positive steps to make Copeland's services more inclusive, accessible and responsive to those groups. There is already a positive duty on Councils to take action to promote race equality, the Sex Discrimination Act has outlawed discrimination by gender, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, passed in April this year requires Councils take positive steps to promote the equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons, and by December next year we expect legislation outlawing 'age-ism'.

Countywide and West Cumbria based public service groups have been set up and are making good progress in pooling ideas.

On 30th June, the results of a Countywide survey of the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Community will be published. The survey will tell us about the needs of that Community and we shall receive feedback specific to Copeland. We intend to make use of the results of that survey.

In March a Gypsy and Traveller Protocol, developed by the County-wide group, was approved by the Executive.

Next month, the Executive will consider a report recommending the Council acquire software learning package and face-to-face training where necessary to increase awareness of the issues I have mentioned in this item.

As a result of the drive to reach the Equality Standard in Local Government (a Best Value Performance Indicator) staff will be looking to review all policies for compliance with equalities legislation.

1.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT - FOOD BUSINESSES

The council recently received a request under the FOI Act from the “News and Star” for information regarding reports of inspections by Environmental Health Officers of food businesses within the borough. The required information, which related to inspections of 263 businesses, was provided within the statutory time period allowed and involved approximately 12 officer hours of time. All businesses concerned were informed by the council of what was happening. The “News and Star” and “Whitehaven News” have subsequently run prominent articles on the matter. Time and effort was put in by way of meetings with the “News and Star” in an attempt to ensure that the subsequent press reports were balanced and it is felt that the attempt was successful.

On 26 May the council received a similar request from the “North West Evening Mail” – this request is being dealt with.

1.3 **SUDAN RED AND PARA RED IN FOOD**

The matter of these dyes in food has been the subject of much high-profile national publicity and numerous “Food Alerts” by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). As at the time of writing (26 May) “Food Alerts” are still being issued by the FSA as the presence of the dyes in more foodstuffs is being detected.

The major alert back in February resulted in the Environmental Health Section contacting 202 food businesses by letter and visiting 4 businesses. A number of enquiries directly from the food trade and the public were received.

1.4 **HAIG MINING MUSEUM – HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK**

The first hearing regarding the prosecutions by the council and the Environment Agency took place recently in Whitehaven Magistrates’ Court and pleas of not guilty were entered. A pre-trial review has been set for late June.

1.5 **BACKS! 2005**

This is a joint national campaign by the Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities to raise awareness of manual handling issues and how back injuries at work can be prevented. Copeland BC will be participating in the campaign and this will be in the form of visits by officers of the Environmental Health Section visiting businesses during June and July. The businesses to be visited will be selected based upon accident history information and the number of persons employed by the business.

1.6 **PLANNING POLICY UPDATE.**

The Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016 2nd deposit version was published 21st April and on public consultation until 3rd June. A Local Plan Programme Officer has now been appointed and a Pre Inquiry Meeting will be held at Cleator Moor Civic Hall, 5th July at 2pm. The Public Inquiry itself is scheduled to commence 27th September 2005.

A meeting of the Local Plan Working Party will be held in early August to consider the objections to the 2nd Deposit Version of the Plan.

We have received confirmation from Government Office that the Copeland Local Development Scheme (LDS) has been accepted. The Council will therefore receive additional Planning Delivery Grant in the region of £50k. The LDS is available on the Council web site as part of a fully updated section on Planning Policy. As previously anyone wishing to object to the latest version of the Local Plan can do so electronically via the web site.

1.7 **REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY**

The North West Regional Assembly has been producing a variety of working papers which will feed into the new regional planning document, the Regional Spatial Strategy or "RSS". This document will provide the strategic context for our new Local Development Framework and covers the next twenty years. A definitive draft version will not be available for formal comment until late September/October but there are already disquieting indications for housing and employment land requirements in Cumbria which have been based on simple economic trend projections. Currently internal working parties at the Assembly are looking at an 11% reduction in employment between 2005 and 2025 in the county and swingeing cuts in the amount of new housing allowed for in all district areas – with scenarios for Copeland suggesting between 33 and 56 dwellings a year (current allowances are something just short of 200 dwellings!)

All of this is obviously at odds with the understanding that members of the West Cumbria Strategic Forum have as regards rebuilding the local economy over the same period. The Council Leader has been in touch with the leader of the Assembly, the NWDA and others to ensure that both this Spatial Strategy and the companion Economic Strategy contain much more positive policy objectives for Copeland. Officers have also been submitting suggested amendments and we hope to have some effect on the work proceeding through the summer.

1.8 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Following the organisational restructure, and as part of the continuing drive to improve our performance in relation to in-house health and safety, Terry Chilcott, Corporate Director (Quality of Life) has taken on the role of senior management "Champion" for health and safety. This will help to provide additional "top-down" drive for the improvement process. At the same time, volunteer Safety Representatives are being sought from all Service Units. They will help to provide the equally important "bottom-up" drive for health and safety improvement. Appropriate modifications to the Council's policy and management arrangement documents in this area are being developed.

2. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Adoption Of Food Safety Service Plan 2005-2006

Date of Decision: 24 May 2005

Decision Reference: EXE/05/005

Context: This report advises members of the Food Safety Service Plan 2005-2006

Decision

That the Executive approve the Food Safety Service Plan 2005-2006 for adoption