

Report from Overview and Scrutiny

Lead Members: Councillors P Connolly, Mrs Y R T Clarkson, J Kane, Mrs W Metherell

Lead Officer: T Capper, Head of Democratic Services

Aug and Sept 2008

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

1. Call In - Interim Measures Resources

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee met on 5 August 2008 to consider a call-in of the Executive's decision of 15 July 2008 (EXE/08/0027) on the Interim Measures Resources.

The Committee heard four hours forty five minutes of oral evidence from five witnesses.

It also considered the following written evidence:

- Definition of Interim Managers
- Applicable part of the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy
- The Council's Application for Financial assistance for Study Purposes
- BBC Article – Agency staff to get equal rights
- Copeland Borough Council non permanent employees at 05 August 2008 (This shows the amount of staff that are employed directly by the council on temporary or fixed term contracts. It did not show agency or interim staff that are employed through other means such as through an agency).

The Committee agreed to ask the Executive:

(A) not to implement this decision until the following safeguards have been put into place so that the process of recruitment of agency/interim staff is coordinated and accountable with clear lines of control:

(1) When agency or interim staff are employed the relevant Manager informs Human Resources of the appointment and informs Accountancy of the amount of payment to ensure it can be correctly coded,

(2) A regular report is submitted to Corporate Team and the Executive on the numbers and costs of appointing agency and interim staff throughout the council so that the costs can be more closely monitored,

(3) A similar process be undertaken where firms are contracted through a procurement method to undertake work where there is a shortage of staff in a department to do that specific work,

(B) to advise Corporate Team:

(1) of its disappointment that the lack of control and accountability has not been addressed,

(2) that it will be expected to consider trends as part of the monitoring report referred to in (A) (2) above and advise the Executive and the Personnel Panel on the appropriate deployment of agency/temporary staff to ensure value for money as well as ensuring sufficient service provision,

(3) that as part of this value for money consideration the costs of employing such staff should be closely controlled to keep costs down such as the payment of accommodation and evening meals for interim staff,

(4) that it will expect, in line with the recent Audit Commission report, that a means for measuring the effectiveness of addressing equality and diversity within the recruitment of interim/agency staff be implemented so that it can be closely monitored and problems resolved if need be,

(5) that such a long suspension of standing orders is not an appropriate use of standing orders and a review of contract standing orders should be undertaken to ascertain whether it is possible for there to be more flexibility in the £10,000 threshold so that it is not tripped retrospectively for recruitment cases,

(C) to request Human Resources to investigate for general recruitment problems:

(1) closer working with the University of Cumbria and Sixth Forms in Copeland to encourage students to take courses in areas where there are shortages such as Regeneration,

(2) a system to encourage those candidates who were a close second in a job interview to reapply for another job at the council,

(D) to note that the relevant Overview And Scrutiny Committee will want to consider the progress of the Housing Action Plan and the Regeneration Delivery Plan in January 2009.

The Executive agreed at its meeting on 12 August 2008 that consideration and determination of this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Executive and a report be submitted by the Chief Executive on the recommendations contained in the report

2. Consultation on Improving Mental Health Services in Cumbria

The Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were provided with an overview of the public consultation document from Cumbria Primary Care Trust on Improving Mental Health Services in Cumbria by Dr Alan Duncan and Mr James Fraser from the NHS Foundation Trust

Members then had the opportunity to put questions to the NHS Foundation Trust representatives during which it was noted that a number of patients with mental health issues were currently requiring hospitalisation and were being treated outside of Cumbria as far away as Manchester and Newcastle. It was also noted that a large number of patients not requiring admission to hospital were being treated at home by their General Practitioners.

It was asked if there was an intention to cater for the younger people of the area and noted that although the consultation proposals dealt with 18 years of age and over, it may be possible to include ages from 16 years upwards. At this stage the under 16 year old age group was not being looked at.

Members were also advised that Libraries throughout the area will be stocked with 'Self-Help' leaflets on depression. Carers will also be able to access advice and education via a Personal Computer on CBT packages.

Following questions, Members thanked Dr Alan Duncan and Mr James Fraser for attending this meeting.

The Committee considered how to proceed with their involvement in the public consultation. It was agreed that a special meeting of the committee would be arranged for Mid-September to which all Members of the Council would be invited to attend.

3. Homelessness Review

The Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report from the Housing Policy Manager that gave a brief overview of the Council's draft Homelessness Review and stated that the Housing Strategy was reviewed every five years.

Members were advised of Local Area Performance Indicators and that these were compared to other authorities in Cumbria.

Members raised questions regarding the turnaround of void properties, inappropriate allocations and the development of new working stock.

The Committee were advised that the main supplier of social housing in Copeland, Copeland Homes, would be presenting to Members before the Full Council meeting on 9 September 2008.

Members acknowledged the excellent work of Peter Deacon the Interim Housing Manager and asked for their thanks to be passed on to him.

4. Pharmacy in England. Building on Strengths – delivering the future

The Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were updated on the Government's white paper on Pharmacy in England. Building on Strengths – delivering the future.

During discussion of this item, the effect this proposal would have on the Seascale practice in particular was highlighted and the suggestion to write to the Health Minister was explored.

The Committee was advised that a special meeting of the Neighbourhood Forum to discuss what action could be taken would be held on Monday 11 August in Bootle.

The Committee agreed that a letter be written to the Health Minister Dawn Primarolo to draw her attention to the effect the proposals in the white paper Pharmacy in England Building on Strengths – delivering the future would have on practices in Copeland and asking that West Cumbria be part of the communications programme.

(NB Councillors Mrs Y Clarkson and P Kane declared a personal interest in this item due to being a patient at the Seascale Surgery and Trinity House Surgery respectively.)

5. The Last Gasp

The Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the Cumbria Health and Well Being Committee Report "The Last Gasp - A Scrutiny of Smoking and Tobacco Control in Cumbria".

During discussion of this item, Members considered ways to encourage Council staff to stop smoking. Members also discussed potential benefits to the Council and enquired what other authorities were doing on the subject.

The Committee agreed that a further session be organised for Council employees who wish to give up smoking.

6. Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave

Recommendations from both the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Personnel Panel following recommendations from a

Task and Finish Group that was established to look into the Council's Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave policies were considered by the Executive on 12 August 2008.

The recommendations were that:

(A) in respect of the Council's Dignity at Work Policy:

1. The Dignity at Work Policy be renamed the Respect at Work policy;
2. the importance of Dignity at Work needs be communicated effectively to all employees, managers and members across the Council;
3. Training be introduced on Dignity at Work across the Council for all managers and Members and periodically refreshed;
4. regular assessment and monitoring of the number of informal and formal complaints under the Council's Dignity at Work policy be regularly reported to the Executive.
5. Human Resources undertake an audit within the next twelve months to:
 - (a) establish how the introduction of a range of Work Life Balance policies would support the Council's future service priorities and help to promote the Council as an employer of choice, and
 - (b) explore the feasibility of using "informal" advisers to allow staff to air concerns informally and confidentially.
6. Corporate Team highlights the Council's successes more effectively through the Team Brief process and encourages Head of Departments to use that process to highlight successes within their own teams.
7. New members of staff receive a formal induction programme that includes a section on Human Resources policies and the importance of Work Life Balance within three months of beginning work at the Council.

(B) in respect of the Council's Compassionate Leave Policy:

1. The new draft Bereavement Leave and Family Illness policies be supported subject to the addition of Grandparents and Grandchildren within the definition of "close family member" in the Bereavement Leave Policy.
2. Human Resources ensure that Trade Union involvement at an early stage and consultation with employees and the Personnel Panel is standard practice in developing the Council's Human Resource policies.

3. The Compassionate Leave Policy be renamed the Special Leave policy and all the policies within this area be included in one document in a similar manner to the South Lakeland Special Leave Document.

The Executive agreed with the recommendations subject to the amendment that the Dignity at Work Policy be renamed Respect and Dignity at Work Policy.

7. Executive Decisions

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered the decisions made by the Executive at its meeting on 12 August 2008.

On the Regeneration Delivery Plan, Members questioned the level of information in the report and discussed whether there might be a role for the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in developing the Delivery Plan further. Members noted that there were a number of stages for the Plan still to be taken through and that the final decision on its adoption would be for full Council.

The Committee agreed that the relevant Portfolio holder and Director be asked to make a presentation to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Regeneration Delivery Plan.

8. Nuclear Opportunities Group

The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from Ms R Mathisen, Nuclear Opportunities Director, West Lakes Renaissance, that began by showing Members a DVD produced to show the Energy Coast. This was followed by an overview of how West Lakes Renaissance intend to deliver, Beacon Projects, Further Challenges and Copeland's role in the project.

During the question and answer session Members raised their concerns at the statement on one slide regarding the siting of the new Acute Services Hospital and "Copeland and WLR would like Pow Beck". It was clarified that Pow Beck was only one site being looked at and was being considered in addition to other sites. It was noted that a decision on the new hospital site would hopefully be made in December 2008.

Members also asked that, within the "Industries for the Future" section, IT and Telephone related industries that do not rely on transport links should be included.

The Committee raised the question of the lack of transport infrastructure in West Cumbria and asked if any work on this had been commenced to identify the type of transport links required. Particularly the only direct road from the north to the south of the Borough, the A595, rail and sea links.

Members stated that there appeared to be a flood of plans/committees, but to date none had demonstrated how they would benefit the unemployed of Copeland. Members also stated their desire to see short, medium and long term project targets, and for the policies to be 'joined up'.

Ms Mathisen was thanked for her presentation to the Committee and invited to attend a future meeting to provide an update.

9. Cumbria Vision: Strategy Action Plans 2008, Consultation Period

The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from Mr M Hodgson, Strategy Manager, Cumbria Vision, that gave a brief overview of on the public consultation on a set of Strategy Action Plans which sat beneath Cumbria's Economic Plan.

Members made a number of comments which included that:-

- Some Members found the Strategic Action Plan document confusing – not sure if it meant West Cumbria, Copeland or Allerdale.
- The Strategic Action Plan was not integrated with the Energy Coast Master Plan
- Health issues in West Cumbria are huge and warrant greater emphasis within the document
- Need to attract new industries – these could include IT, Information Communications & Marketing where telecommuting could be used and reliance on poor transport links minimised.
- Ideas need to be built into the Planning policy
- General lack of Transport in Copeland
- Sea transport – Whitehaven not mentioned in this section
- A595, which is the only main road linking the north and south of the borough is a major issue, particularly south of Sellafield.
- Tourism is a major industry in mid and south Copeland, yet it is not mentioned in the Action Plan
- Bridge/Barrage across the Duddon Estuary needs to be a priority in order to give greater access to Millom residents and businesses.
- Bootle, Calderbridge and Bigrigg by-passes need to be prioritised
- Members support the Carlisle Airport plan. They believe it is vital to the west Cumbria area and would like to see it progressed as quickly as possible.
- Improved road links to Millom and develop a sealink from the town to aid local industries
- Biggest economic challenge in the UK is Nuclear – not covered
- East Whitehaven relief road is not mentioned.
- West Cumbria a priority of the NWDA – not covered
- Action Plan has nothing new – how's it going to deliver?
- Needs to be 'joined up'.
- No mention of Agriculture/Horticulture

- “net exporter of energy” – how? – grid capacity – cables through the National Park/Undersea.

Members were advised that comments for inclusion in the Council's response to the public consultation should be made in writing and sent to F McMorrow, Corporate Director Economic Prosperity and Sustainability, by 5 September 2008.

Mr M Hodgson was thanked for his presentation and invited to attend a future meeting to provide an update.

10. Call In – Disposal of land at Johnson House

A Sub Group set up by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a call of the Executive's decisions of 12 August 2008 (**EXE/07/0036 and EXE/07/0054**) on the 'Disposal of Property Land at Johnson House'.

The Group met on 28 and 29 August 2008 to consider evidence from a number of internal and external witnesses. These were:

- Abbeyfield Society
- Residents and local ward councillor
- Executive Portfolio Holder
- Property Services Manager

The Group further met on 1 September 2008 to seek the professional advice of the Head of Democratic Services, Property Services Manager, Deputy Acting Section 151 Officer, Legal Services Manager and Scrutiny Support Officer on its recommendations.

The Executive were asked to consider:

- (A) that consultation on this site should have followed that required for land as an open space and the site should be re-advertised under the requirements of Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (B) that on a disposal of land (whether by freehold or the grant of a lease in excess of 21 years) a letter should be sent to the owners of land whose boundaries adjoin the intended disposal site advising them of the Council's intention to dispose of the land so that their comments can be taken into account when the decision to dispose of the land is considered;
- (C) that future reports to the Executive on the disposal of land include full and detailed information on the land and the Council's policies so that the Executive can reach an informed decision;

- (D) that contract standing order 21 be amended so that disposals of land (whether by freehold or the grant of a lease in excess of 21 years) which are, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer (in consultation with the Section 151 Officer), likely to raise significant public issues (irrespective of the value of the land) be referred to Full Council for consideration;
- (E) that a possible solution to this situation would be to (a) sell to the owners of Johnson House the land that it needs to enable the extension to proceed; (b) sell to the residents the woodland area for them to develop the site as a woodland area; and (c) to negotiate with the owners of Johnson House in respect of the area near the driveway to Johnson House so that a public right of way or easement is available for the public to access the woodland, and
- (F) that if the Executive is minded to endorse the solution at (E) that:
 - (a) notice of intention to dispose of the land is advertised in the Whitehaven News for two consecutive weeks in accordance with section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972;
 - (b) that the Property Services Manager be requested following the placing of that notice to discuss the matter with the owners of Johnson House and the residents to explore and prepare heads of terms (subject to approval) for the respective purchases; and
 - (c) that a full report be made to the Executive on responses received to the notice of intention to dispose and the outcome of discussions with the owners of Johnson House and residents and a decision made on whether the land should be disposed of. If either disposal appears to be at a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained that a separate valuation will be required confirming that the disposal falls within the General Disposal Consent 06/2003. The Executive decision can be made subject to that confirmation being received. If following the advert and outcome of discussions the matters remains one which is likely to raise significant public issues and the Executive has endorsed recommendation (D) above then the decision will be referred to Full Council.

The Executive at its meeting on 16 September 2008 agreed that:

- A the recommendations set out in the report be noted and that a further report be submitted to the Executive at a later date on implications arising from the recommendations;
- B in respect of the proposed disposal of the land that:

- (i) the proposed disposal be advertised in accordance with section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (ii) negotiations take place with the owners of Johnson House for the disposal to them of the land which they require for development;
- (iii) negotiations take place with the residents group for the disposal of the woodland to them with a view to implementing a sustainable woodland management plan;
- (iv) should the recommendation set out in iii) (above) be unsuccessful negotiations take place with the owners of Johnson House for the disposal of the woodland area; and
- (v) a report be made to the Executive meeting on the 11 November detailing the outcome of negotiations and proposing a way forward for the disposal of the land.

11. British Telecom Payphone Closures

The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a special meeting on 2 September 2008 were provided with the up-to date position on the planned BT Payphone closure programme and a copy of BT's letter regarding 'Adopting' and 'Sponsoring' a public phone box.

Members then considered each of the 25 public payphones identified for closure in the Copeland area, using the research material (including photographs) gathered by officers, BT's call data and responses from Parish/Town Councils, Public and Cumbria Constabulary.

During discussion of this item Members again raised concerns regarding the removal of a vital link from some of the most remote sites in the Borough where mobile phone coverage is either poor or non existent. Some of the sites also being close to known accident 'black spots'.

It was also noted that some of the boxes identified for closure had not been maintained by British Telecom and were not serviceable when inspected.

Members were keen to support the Parish and Town Councils and maintain these vital links in the Borough.

The Committee thanked the Officers for their thorough research on this subject and agreed that:

- a) The Council respond to British Telecom objecting to the closure of 24 of the 25 public payphones identified for closure in the Borough. The one public payphones not to be objected to is that at Lamplugh (phone number 01946 861212).

- b) The draft schedule be updated with the comments made by the Committee and this form the basis of the Council's response to British Telecom and the Secretary of State.
- c) British Telecom's letter regarding 'Adopting' or 'Sponsoring' a phone box be copied to Town and Parish Councils for their information.

12. Staff Recruitment and Retention

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at a special meeting on 4 September 2008 considered the report of the Staff Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group.

During discussion of this item, the Head of Policy and Performance advised Members that it was intended to produce a 'Workforce Development Plan' within the next year.

Members stated they were keen to progress the recommendations as soon as possible due to the large number of temporary/contract/interim staff currently employed by the Council and the changes recommended were to the Recruitment Handbook, that could then feed into the 'Workforce Development Plan'.

Members discussed the recruitment needs where the vacancy was for a specialist job. The Committee also enquired if all Copeland vacancies were advertised on the website and if the Trade Union were being kept fully up-to-date.

The Committee requested that the Staff Survey take place annually to establish the effects on staff morale.

The Committee agreed that:

- a) the report of the Staff Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group be received.
- b) the suggested recommendations be incorporated and progressed via the Personnel Panel.
- c) the Staff Survey take place annually.
- d) the report be reviewed in 6 months.

13. National Indicators

The Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report detailing the National Indicators falling within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee noted that these Indicators were part of 198 National Indicators announced by the Department of Communities and Local Government in October 2007, following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

The national indicator set will be the measures on which central government will performance manage outcomes delivered by local government working alone or in partnerships along with some Best Value Performance Indicators that the Council had been recommended by the Audit Commission to keep as local indicators.

There would also be some 25 indicators from the Cumbria Local Area Agreement and some "legacy" indicators that are left over from the previous Local Area Agreement.

Officers had taken a look at the committee's work plan and considered how best it could best fit into the council strategic objectives and to help drive improvement where it is needed alongside these indicators.

The Committee agreed with the officer's suggestion that its next meeting should deal with how the indicators on crime figures were going to be achieved. The meeting on 18 December would deal with Climate Change where there were a number of new indicators some of which fell on the council.

In the meantime, a Task and Finish Group would be set up to deal with "liveability". Liveability was about having a cleaner safer environment in which to live and work. It was about the attractiveness of the area and encouraging people to use outdoor facilities. It was about the streets and how clean they are, the parks and open spaces, sports and play facilities, it was about welcoming town centres and shopping areas.

It was also about places for children and young people to play, places for pensioners to stroll, places for families to enjoy.

14. Planning and Building Control Enforcement

Planning Panel at its meeting on 17 September 2008 considered the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Economic Development and Enterprise Committee's Task and Finish Group that had been set up to look at how the Planning and Building Control enforcement service was dealt with by the Council.

During discussion of this item, the Panel were advised that Corporate Team had approved a Full Time Enforcement Officer (subject to the Job Evaluation process).

It was also suggested that a letter be issued with the Planning Decision notice asking the applicant to advise the Council when building work commenced.

The Panel agreed that:

(A) in respect of the Council's Planning Enforcement Manual:

- (1) it should be updated with a clear design and layout as well as the use of plain English,
- (2) the priorities set out in the manual should be confirmed by the Planning Panel,
- (3) once updated a copy should be placed on the council's website and be made available for download.

(B) the following processes be implemented, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that greater control is available over Planning and Building Control Enforcement Issues:

- (1) The information on planning enforcement on the council's website should be updated. It should also include the capacity to submit information and raise planning enforcement concerns on-line, and have a "who's who" of key officer contacts,
- (2) Good practice examples from other local authorities should be investigated in order to produce the best possible material and presentation,
- (3) The recording of requests for Planning Enforcement should be improved and brought into line with the Council's policy of acknowledging a letter within 3 working days and a full response within 10 working days,

Any such requests that fall within the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure should also be sent to the Customer Relations Officer for monitoring and recording purposes,

- (4) An ongoing log of enforcement successes should be established and maintained,
- (5) A programme for securing regular and widespread publicity for planning enforcement successes should be developed and implemented in collaboration with the Communications Team,
- (6) The requirement in the Council's planning enforcement manual for a quarterly review of the performance of the enforcement function

should be implemented and the reviews submitted to the Planning Panel,

- (7) The proposal to Personnel Panel to recruit an enforcement officer be strongly supported.
- (C) **Resources be made available over the longer term to ensure a number of improvements can be made to the Planning and Building Control Enforcement Service that should include that:**

- (1) Officers are requested to find a cost effective solution to checking that developments take place in accordance with approved development plans so that future complaints against the council can be minimized,

This could be addressed through a more regular use of a condition that stated that the development should be completed in accordance with the submitted plans.

It would be useful if this was part of a book of "Standard model reasons for refusal".

- (2) An Enforcement Forum (a multi-disciplinary working group of officers involved in enforcement action across the Council) should be established to review and utilise more effectively all the possible powers that the Council has at its disposal to secure enforcement, including planning enforcement,

Consideration should be given to the inclusion of the Police within this forum,

- (3) The Officer group that is looking at dilapidated buildings consider how the council could take a similar approach to Allerdale on the renovation or demolition of such sites and report on this to the Planning Panel.

- (D) **A report be submitted in six months time on the changes made as a result of these recommendations and the effect of those changes.**

15. Planning Appeals

Planning Panel at its meeting on 17 September 2008 considered the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Economic Development and Enterprise Committee's Task and Finish Group. The sub-group had been established to look at how Appeals against planning decisions were dealt with by the Council and had been undertaking a six month review of its recommendations.

During consideration of this item, Members discussed Delegated Matters, Training and which planning applications are put to the Planning Panel.

The Panel agreed that consideration should be given by Full Council to substitute Planning Panel Members being identified and trained accordingly.

The Panel also agreed that:

- (1) The Development Services Manager's review of the amount of planning decisions that are made by delegated authority should be commenced and submitted to the Planning Panel as soon as possible,
- (2) The final version of the Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016 should be published as soon as possible,
- (3) A convention should be introduced that members of the planning panel should have attended training on development control and planning issues before they can serve on the panel, and
- (4) A further six month review of these recommendations be undertaken to ensure that satisfactory progress is made on these outstanding matters.

16. Update on Gershon Efficiencies

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered a report upon Gershon efficiencies. Under the Gershon programme in 2004 the Government had set targets for all public sector bodies to find 2.5% in efficiencies on their baseline in 2004/05.

Copeland was required to find £920,000 in total of cashable and non cashable over the three years of the Gershon programme. Consideration was given to an updating report on proposals for the three years 2005/08.

The Committee agreed that in future all reports should include efficiency impact indicators.

17. Strategic Risk Register

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered a report that stated that in order to achieve the Council's objectives it was necessary for it to manage and identify what risks may arise so that appropriate measures may be put in place.

Consideration was given to a draft strategic risk register prior to submission to the Audit Committee and subsequently the Executive for formal approval.

It was noted that the monitoring of this was included in the quarterly monitoring reports to the Audit Committee. During consideration of this item Members note that the AT 2.5 – “Customers may continue to find our services unsatisfactory” had been set at risk level 2 and asked that this be amended to 1 as this should be achievable.

18. National Indicators

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered a report detailing the National Indicators falling within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee as well as the other three committees.

It was noted that a covalent report would be the subject of a report to a future meeting as progress on national indicators was developed nationally. It was noted that the outcome of the Place Survey would be reported to Committee in March 2009 and Members asked for that report to be issued to all Members of the Council.

The Committee agreed that refresher training on issues such as Housing and Council Tax benefits should be offered to Members of the Council in order to enable them to be more effective in their wards.

19. Honorary Aldermen

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered a report looking at the guidance for the role of Honorary Alderman for Copeland.

It was noted that this issue was included in the work plan for the Committee however, after research throughout other authorities and guidance in “Civic Ceremonial” (History and Guide for Mayors, Councillors and Officers by Paul Millward) it was felt that there would be not enough work for a task and finish group.

The Committee considered what role the Aldermen could take on the Council and agreed to recommend to council that the role of the Honorary Aldermen continue to be that:

The Aldermen are invited to attend at the Civic Sunday, Remembrance Sunday, the Annual General Meeting and the Mayor's Charity Evening/Ball.

In respect of the council's committee meetings Honorary Aldermen receive agendas for council meetings and others on request. Aldermen can attend meetings in the same manner as for a member of the public but will have access to the members room at the Copeland Centre.

Attendance at meetings as an Alderman does not convey any rights to participate in meetings, and also does not convey rights to attend meetings for exempt or confidential business.

20. NHS Cumbria Consultation on Improvement to Mental Health Services

A special meeting of the Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2008 considered how the Council should respond to the NHS public consultation on the "Improvement to Mental Health Services" proposals.

The Committee had evidence from:

MIND (written evidence)

West Cumbria Carers (Dorothy Barwise, Carers Support Worker and Sue Whitehead, Manager)

Age Concern (Vivien Nichol Age Concern's North West's lead on mental health issues)

Jim Fraser – Mental Health Network Lead for Cumbria Primary Care Trust

It also considered written evidence from the Cumbria Mental Health Group in its formal response to 2008 PCT consultation on improving mental health services in Cumbria.

The Committee agreed that:

Cumbria Primary Care Trust and Cumbria County Council Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee be advised that in respect of the "Mental Health Services" Consultation proposals this Council considers that:

Whilst welcoming a number of the proposals in the consultation there are a number of areas that it would like the PCT to consider. These are:

- (A) The extra travelling that will be required by male patients with severe organic illness and their families/carers from West Cumbria to Carlisle.

The PCT is requested to ensure that its planned programme of support for those who have to do this travelling be tested and have community support before the change is implemented. This should cover the availability of public transport and the extra costs that would be incurred in using it.

- (B) That more funding is considered to sustain and start further help groups in the third sector particularly to cover those people with dementia.
- (C) That the PCT's proposed training development plan to help voluntary organisations that would help them to prepare for the change and to enable them to develop be put into place and tested before the change is implemented.
- (D) Whether it is appropriate for older people with functional illness to be admitted to Yewdale ward or to travel to Oakwood ward in Carlisle.
- (E) That the PCT should give a long term commitment to maintaining in - patient units in Whitehaven.
- (F) The Council is concerned that the proposals are being considered before the appropriate community support groups are established and would expect these groups to be put into place before the changes are implemented.
- (G) There should be greater consideration given to the geographic nature of West Cumbria and the effect that such isolation has on mental health patients and their family support network.
- (H) That the proposals for changing bed numbers be not undertaken until the PCT's overall mental health strategy has been published and publicly commented on as there is concern that the expected growth in the need for dementia services has not been sufficiently addressed in these proposals.

Added to this is the projection that by 2029 in Cumbria over 1 in 3 people will be of retirement age which will be a 64% increase since 2004.

Furthermore, as there has been a significant increase in those aged 75-84 (41%) in Copeland from 1981 to 2006 which is a greater increase than that experienced across Cumbria (34%) there is concern that the rise in the number of people with dementia will be greater in West Cumbria.

It is understood that the overall strategy will more clearly deal with the implications of the national dementia strategy.

- (I) That in respect of developing its mental health strategy the PCT should ensure that:

1. its fully engages with users, carers and stakeholders,

2. it explains how carers can access direct practical support from mental health professionals during times of crisis particularly in the evening and during weekends,
3. it explains what training will be given for support workers particularly for young carers,
4. it explains what respite help will be given to carers,
5. it considers how more flexible support for carers can be given particularly in day care provision in the evenings and weekends,
6. it considers in seeking to achieve a more flexible day care provision the needs of different age groups particularly those under 65 with dementia,
7. it explains what work is being done to overcome concerns about the ability of some GPs to diagnose dementia at an early stage,
8. it has a strong focus on preventive measures including early intervention and appropriate assessment which should include a target for a quicker response time of less than four hours by the Crisis Resolution Teams,
9. it shows where the extra facilities will be created in the community to cover the expected high growth of people with dementia across Cumbria,
10. it explains the proposed training development plan to be provided for third sector organizations,
11. it explains the implications of dual diagnosis, and
12. it explains the budgetary implications of any changes that are proposed.

21. Locality Working

The Joint Authority Scrutiny Working Group: West Cumbria Strategic Partnership at its meeting on 22 September 2008 considered a report on locality working.

The Joint Group agreed that there would be a general discussion on locality working combining items 2, 3 and 4 of the agenda, the responses from the Local Authorities, the draft report to the West Cumbria Public Service Delivery Board, and the next steps.

Members did not have any comments to make with respect to the responses from the Local Authorities as to how they planned to take locality working forward.

In discussion of the report to be tabled to the Public Services Delivery Board of the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership, Members acknowledged that locality working was the direction in which authorities and public service delivery agencies would need to travel to. They did however, identify some of the challenges which might be faced in delivering locality working and expressed some concern at the effectiveness of locality working.

Members felt that in some instances there would be issues around relationships between the respective tiers of local government which would make this more challenging in some localities than others.

Members were increasingly being asked to take on more and more responsibility at locality level without the support they required. It was becoming a full-time job and this should be recognised and appropriate administrative support put in place at locality level, where it was required, to help it happen. Some Town and Parish Councils did not have the necessary capacity to undertake the work required.

However in some areas, that support was already there, for example, in neighbourhood management areas. Members were fearful though of the outcome when the funding dried up for those posts.

There were also issues around where the 'localities' were drawn up, and boundary anomalies meant that some County Councillors would end up participating in two localities, which would be a heavy commitment.

In some areas, local partnerships were already in place and whilst all localities were different it would be helpful if a phased approach was adopted that would take account of local circumstances and learning from other areas.

It was noted that there were already mechanisms in place for community engagement and it was felt that neighbourhood forums, for example, were working quite well, and that individual organisations also had their own means of community engagement.

Members noted that locality working was working quite well in some parts of some organisations, however it was acknowledged that this area was still a major challenge. The Police, Cumbria Primary Care Trust, and Cumbria County Council's Children's Services had already made significant changes.

Production of locality plans by the appropriate locality group, an example of which has been done by the Mid and South Copleand partnerships and

in some areas of Allerdale, showed the need to share plans for a locality with partner organisations which would help organisations to work in partnership on locally derived priorities. In many instances, those plans or networks were not in place.

Members noted that at a local level they wanted to influence partners, and it was also suggested that there may be scope to loosen the reins in some areas to allow more local delivery, providing this didn't adversely affect outcomes or affect economies of scale.

Members considered that regular training on this new way of working was crucial for members and particularly officers and noted that this was planned to happen shortly.

Members were content with the recommendations included in the report, subject to the above comments and agreed that:

- (A) the suggested actions for partner organisations and the Public Service Delivery Board should include an additional column which showed how the item was going to be delivered.
- (B) Members' comments should be forwarded to the Public Services Delivery Board for consideration.
- (C) Members would like to continue to monitor the progress towards locality working.