

## **COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 22 JANUARY 2008**

#### **Effective Leadership – Councillor Elaine Woodburn – Leader**

#### **Councillor Allan Holliday – Deputy Leader**

#### **Property Disposals**

The Council programme of disposals includes this year the former Kells School site. This is a relatively large site with a total of 77 properties allocated in the Local Plan, with construction phased up to the year 2016.

A development brief is being prepared, prior to advertisement for sale, to assist prospective purchasers, advising of Council policies and planning considerations. Responding to local community representations, it is proposed to make a proportion of the site available to local residents for construction of approximately 10 to 12 self build plots.

In order to ensure fairness the Council has suggested that a Residents' Association is formed to involve and represent local people, and to co-ordinate self build negotiations with the Council.

In due course a formal report will be presented to members seeking to dispose of the site to a developer, with a portion to be dealt with separately for the local community.

#### **Financial Settlement Update**

The initial announcement of the provisional three year settlement figures confirmed that the Council would receive a settlement of £7.171m for 2008/09 and that efficiency savings of 3% per annum would have to be made which could be used either to keep Council Tax increases to a minimum or be ploughed back into new growth areas. This level of funding equates to an increase of 2% on the current year's settlement which is in line with Government indices for inflation for the public sector.

Later announcements revealed that Copeland would receive an extra £1.4 million in 2008/09, tailoring off to £1 million in 2010/11, from the new Working Neighbourhood Fund which replaces the current Neighbourhood Renewal fund and brings into play the Department of Works and Pensions Deprivation Fund. £1.4m equates to real term growth of 19% on the 2008/09 settlement.

The new area based formula grant comes about as a result of changes to the Government grant regime which shift resources from specific and LAA ring

fenced grant to formula based grant in order to give local authorities greater flexibility to better manage their financial pressures and decide their own community funding priorities. This is good news for the Council which has been lobbying the Government to recognise the special needs of the people of Copeland some of whom are living in an area which comprises some of the worst pockets of deprivation in the country.

The Council will be re-examining its financial strategy in light of receiving these additional resources and this will be reflected in further budget reports.

### **Nuclear Issues**

2007 ended with an historic high point on the nuclear front. The government agreed to support the establishment of a community endowment fund to provide community benefits to offset negative impacts arising from the Low Level Waste Repository. This is a major achievement following our long term lobbying on the issue. The details of how funding will be paid over and managed are being negotiated at the time of writing. The fund will be set up with an initial £10 million payment, although this could be paid in two or three instalments. Annually a further £1.5 million will be paid in while waste is being put into the site. A formula is included in the arrangement which would increase the latter sum if the radioactive content of the deposited material increased above the average of the last five years. Equally if the site was not being used in any year no payment would be made. The site will remain for Low Level Wastes only. The fund will be managed to ensure an ongoing revenue stream beyond the closure of the facility and when radioactive waste remain is still present in that location.

The news that the Government is allowing the development of a new programme of nuclear power stations is very welcome. The future of our area is very much tied up with the fortunes of the Nuclear Industry. This announcement moves the industry from one being decommissioned to one which is potentially growing and the subject of massive investment. Copeland Borough Council has lent its support to this policy direction for a considerable time. In 2004 the Council passed a resolution supporting new nuclear build in our area. We are continuing to work hard to explore the potential of new power stations being built here although this is unlikely to be in the first round of developments. A major feasibility study is under way to explore the prospects in detail. We continue to support the provision of new reprocessing contracts. In addition we are exploring a range of other ways of enhancing the economy in the light of these investments.

During this month the Council has also responded to the consultation on the NDA's Business Plan for 2008/9 – 2010/11. This has been agreed by the Nuclear Working Group. We have strongly welcomed the priority given to deal with the higher hazards, but have expressed concerns about the way the socio

economic funding is being handled. A copy of the full response is available in the Members' Room and on our website.

2008 promises to be another critical year in relation to Copeland and Nuclear Policy. The Government is expected to issue its White Paper on managing radioactive waste safely in the Spring. It will invite communities to come forward to discuss the potential of hosting a geological repository. We will give this matter very careful consideration.

## **Achieving Transformation- Councillor Cath Giel - Deputy Leader**

### **Councillor Norman Williams - Portfolio Holder**

### **Councillor Tim Knowles - Portfolio Holder**

2007 was a year of laying foundations whilst sustaining and supporting existing projects. Regeneration projects and initiatives were many and varied. I have selected a few to give a flavour of the progress made throughout 2007 and an indication of what is to come in 2008.

In Whitehaven we witnessed a slow start to the Coastal Fringe enhancement project but this is now underway and will improve access to and from the headland making the area a more pleasant one in which to walk and cycle. The project is supported by £1.6m of English Partnerships money. Alongside the work on the headland and around the candlestick we have supported the Haig Museum in their bid to secure significant funding to redevelop the Haig Colliery, turning this heritage facility into a first class visitor attraction and resource for the community. The next link in improving the coastline from Whitehaven to the St Bees Heritage coast is the future of the Rhodia site - the Council is engaging with relevant organisations and plans should become clearer in 2008.

The refurbished Beacon opened its doors in the latter part of 2007 in readiness for the new tourist season. Numbers are already up on previous years and the workshops and outreach programmes, including visits to schools, means that as well as the Beacon being a hive of activity its influence is reaching out into the community more than ever before.

The Harbour Commissioners' boat repair facility will be operational in 2008.

After many years of patient negotiation with partners and developers we are close to reaching agreement on the long awaited hotel proposal. This is also the case for a revised and improved design for the new Tesco and a new residential development on the Pears House site. These proposals will bring major improvements to the harbour side.

New residential development will bring more life to the town day and evening and boost activity on the harbour side through our policy of requiring uses such as shops and restaurants on the ground floor of new harbour side developments.

An important element of the success of any town is getting transport right and major studies on car parking and traffic will be completed with proposals to make the town both accessible and a pleasure to get round for pedestrians and cyclists as well as motorists. There will be improvements to the public realm including

new signing and other street furniture and agreement on the design for a new public space around the Civic Hall.

The Council will be working with West Lakes Renaissance to ensure that progress is made in implementing some of the ambitious plans for regeneration of the area, not least the Pow Beck development. As with all ambitious plans you have to have patience, foresight and be prepared to persevere - in 2008, we will be engaging with a development partner to bring a private sector investment perspective to some of our regeneration initiatives.

In 2008 plans will be agreed for the future of South Whitehaven, particularly in the estates of Kells, Woodhouse and Greenbank. The Council will be working hard with Copeland Homes, the residents and other partners to produce plans, which will make a real difference to the quality of life of those living in the area. The next phase of Housing Market Renewal will see further injections of funding into redressing housing market imbalance. South Whitehaven will be one of the areas that will particularly benefit from additional funding and effort in 2008 to do more about assisting people into work through training and other forms of support. This work will build on that already underway through the Local Area Agreement.

The Market Town Initiative funding from the North West Development Agency for Egremont and Millom ends in March 2008. The Council has worked hard to secure alternative funding for these local partnerships, along with Regen North East Copeland in Cleator Moor, to sustain their activity for at least another year whilst partners develop new solutions for all market towns in the County. These local partnerships are vital in providing economically viable service centres not only for the local community but also those in surrounding villages and hamlets. A fantastic range of projects have been developed by the local partnerships and it will be a high priority for the Council to ensure that these are sustained into the future.

Rural areas have not received a very high focus in previous years but in 2008 the Council hopes to better support these communities in their development of local community plans and integrate the outcomes from these into its own work and priorities.

December's Full Council meeting endorsed the Executive Summary of the West Cumbria Master Plan – The Energy Coast. A delivery team has been established and it is in 2008 that the area should start to see the benefit of having a single comprehensive plan for the regeneration of West Cumbria.

On a different note but one that is integral to our regeneration and development plans, the Local Development Framework (LDF) provides the guidance and framework in which planning policy and decisions are based. This month we have to reaffirm the formal adoption of three planning documents: the Wind

Energy Supplementary Planning Document (a joint-authority, Cumbria-wide project), Copeland's own Statement of Community Involvement and the Pow Beck Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document. This is because the new Regulations for development planning documents only allow for a 3 months grace period between the Adoption date and any claim for judicial review. You may recall that two of these documents were adopted by the Council on 25<sup>th</sup> September last year. Unfortunately we have gone past the 3 months grace period without issuing the formal adoption statement. I apologise to Members for having to bring the two documents back for additional consideration and would ask that the recommendations are supported.

The Council's Annual Monitoring Report on the year 2006-07 was successfully completed and submitted to government before the 31 December deadline. The report contains many interesting facts and figures for the local area and measures the Council's progress in meeting its planning objectives. It is available for inspection on the Council's web-site and my thanks go to the Officers responsible for its production.

In conclusion, there is much for this Council to achieve we are entering a period of significant change with many challenges ahead. I believe we can rise to the challenge and look forward to an exciting and successful 2008.

**Promoting Prosperity – Councillor George Clements Deputy Leader**

**Councillor Geoff Blackwell - Portfolio Holder**

**Councillor Hugh Branney - Portfolio Holder**

**Stop Smoking Support**

A new step to a new you and support to keep those New Year Resolutions ....

As part of a joint working arrangement with the Primary Care Trust the Smokefree Compliance Officer (post funded by Department of Health grant) has completed training to provide community based support to groups of people who want to give up smoking. The support will be provided in an information setting to groups and is intended to support the existing 1 to 1 support offered by the Stop Smoking team which currently has a long waiting list.

Copeland are now offering group Quit Smoking sessions to support to staff and Councillors who want to give up smoking with group support over 7 sessions of approximately an hour each run over 7 weeks – at the Copeland Centre and arranged to fit in over lunchtimes or outside of flexi core hours.

**Salmonella Outbreak**

Environmental Health is currently investigating 12 cases of Salmonella food poisoning among students at St Benedict's School, Whitehaven which occurred just before the start of the school Christmas Holidays.

The first case was notified on 18 December 2007. The school kitchen was inspected on the same day and conditions were clean with no ongoing risk identified.

The students are now recovering and are well.

The school and school meals provider (Aramark Limited) are fully co-operating with the investigation.

Full details will be provided at the end of the investigation.

**Water Fluoridation**

The Council has been a Member of the UK Councils Against Water Fluoridation (formally the North West Councils Against Water Fluoridation) for a number of years, essentially due to ethical concerns. A recent review commissioned by the UKCAWF questioned the legality of water fluoridation. While the legal arguments

used are complex they revolve around the principles of whether the form of fluoride used is a medicine or food.

The Council is not in a position to enter into lengthy legal discussions with United Utilities over the validity of the review. However, a copy of the review was made available to United Utilities requesting their opinion of the legal argument. They have subsequently taken their own legal opinion and while being unwilling to provide a copy of this to the Council they have confirmed, in their view, that “the supply of artificially fluoridated water by the company pursuant to the Water Act 2003 is lawful”.

### **Netball Development in Copeland**

Sports Development has been working closely with Copeland Netball League to secure £1000 to promote the sport in Copeland. The funding will be available to train new coaches for the junior age group and to assist clubs in developing robust operational procedures. Coaching courses are set to commence in April 2008 and are to be delivered in West Cumbria, making it easier for local people to access the training.

The junior sessions will then start in September 2008, with inter district competition opportunities following on for new participants. These participants will also be introduced to the local club network, giving them opportunity to continue to play into young adulthood and beyond.

Alongside this junior development, a “Back to Netball” project is being launched. This aims to re-engage previous non-participants and starts off with general sessions to rebuild confidence and skills levels. The project will assist with removing barriers to participation via assisting with childcare, and also introduce competition and incentives at the appropriate stages.

### **Dance Development**

A Copeland Dance Company was launched in the autumn and is going from strength to strength. Junior company attendance continues to grow, with about 12-18 young people attending every week and the youth company attracting similar numbers. The youth session is a structured session with the group working towards a performance that will showcase new skills and celebrate the achievements of the young people involved.

### **Copeland Sport and Physical Activity Alliance (SPAA)**

Work is progressing extremely well on the development of the Copeland SPAA, with the vision document complete and the delivery plan in final draft form. A number of partner agencies have been keen to engage with the process, with a range of exciting projects being proposed that would satisfy the Sport England



Community Investment Fund criteria. Projects include increasing access to quality sports coaching, working with the Copeland School Sports Partnership to encourage healthy lifestyles, getting 16-19 year olds more active by providing alternative activities, assisting with facility developments in priority areas, and getting inactive adults re-engaged in sport and physical activity.

A final meeting of the Copeland SPAA group will be held at the end of January, with the proposals then put forward to the North West Sports Board for approval and funding.

### **Waste Awareness**

A new initiative to improve participation in recycling is being piloted in Copeland over the next couple of months in an effort to boost the Borough and County recycling rates. The Cumbria Waste Partnership has selected Cleator Moor as the target area for the first Resource Cumbria intensive community waste awareness campaign. The partnership initiative will involve officers from Copeland's waste team working alongside Cumbria County Council's Waste Prevention Team delivering a number of activities aimed at improving participation in recycling. The pilot campaign will be preceded with monitoring of current participation levels to establish how well current services are used. It is hoped that the activities will encourage involvement from schools, retailers, employers and sports clubs and will involve presentations, workshops, incentive schemes and recycling clinics as well as "doorstepping", thereby meeting directly with householders and service users. Crew training will also be included in the package, which, linked to an incentive scheme will challenge recycling crews to promote the service by increasing the interaction with service users.

### **National Tree Week**

I am please to inform Members that a total of 369 trees have been planted across Copeland supporting National Tree Week.

Officers from the Council's Open Spaces department worked closely with schools and community groups to complete the planting.

- Children from Millom Infants School planted trees in Millom Park
- Children from Black Combe School, Millom planted trees in the school grounds
- Children from the Valley School, Whitehaven also planted trees in the school grounds
- The Whitehaven 5<sup>th</sup> Brownie Group planted tress in High Street Park, Whitehaven
- Horticultural trainees of Distington Walled Garden planted trees in the grounds of Distington Crematorium.

## **Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)**

The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive is now fully in force in the UK. The Directive aims to minimise the impact of electrical and electronic goods on the environment, by increasing re-use and recycling and reducing the amount of equipment waste going to landfill. It seeks to achieve this by making producers responsible for financing the collection, treatment and recovery of waste electrical equipment, and by obliging distributors to allow consumers to return their waste equipment free of charge.

The Regulations introduced new rules of producers, distributors, exporters of electrical and electronic equipment and householders.

Producers of equipment waste must join a Producer Compliance Scheme (PCS) to discharge their obligations to recycle waste equipment.

Distributors (shops) must provide facilities to customers to return old equipment free of charge.

Exporters will only be able to issue evidence of equipment waste treatment or recovery overseas if they have been approved by the Environment Agency.

Business end user of such equipment should no longer need to pay for the disposal of equipment when it becomes waste. Producers pay for the treatment, collection and recycling in most cases.

Householders have no obligations under the Regulations but can help to recycle these goods. They are entitled to ask retailers to take back an old item for each new item purchased. They are also entitled to ask the Council or retailer to collect equipment waste but the Council is entitled to charge for the collection.

Every year in the UK, households throw away around 1 million tonnes of waste equipment such as TVs, fridges, hairdryers and computers...

## **Housing**

As Members will be aware, the Audit Commission is undertaking an inspection of our housing services and they have a team in the Council Offices between 14 – 18 January. They interview Members and Officers plus representatives of outside agencies, customers and local businesses to inform their work and provide us with an assessment a few weeks later. We have already supplied a good deal of evidence and other supporting material to the Commission in advance of the inspection and I would like to thank those Members and Officers who have been involved in this process. I will provide a verbal update at Full Council.

The government is finalising its proposals for the 2008/09 Housing Capital Allocations. The announcement will probably be made next month but the indication is that for the North West Region the overall settlement will be less than the previous year and this could be around a 25% reduction. The Regional Housing Board and Government Office are in discussion now about how to apportion this reduction between local authorities and we have been emphasising to these bodies the need to maximise the resource to be made available to Copeland to ensure that the Market Renewal Initiative continues to be supported.

Our housing teams are still seriously depleted and I would like to thank all staff for their continued hard work and commitment through this difficult period. We have advertised for 3 vacant posts this month following the Personnel Panel's support for minor salary enhancements at their December meeting and I look forward to more successful recruitment this year

#### **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**None**