

EXECUTIVE REPORT

HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

COUNCILLOR GEORGE CLEMENTS – PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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1. KEY ISSUES – PROGRESS REPORT

1.1 Community Safety

Violent Crime: Alcohol related violent crime is showing a significant reduction in Whitehaven town centre, this has been linked to the success of the Nightsafe Campaign. The group is now focussing more attention on the problems still increasing in Egremont, Millom and Cleator Moor.

All appropriate licences have been issued and applications are now being received for variations and appeals against decisions previously made.

The Global Rock Challenge is preparing to take place at the end of April and the Council and the Partnership both support this event. Local secondary schools across West Cumbria take part in a very professional music and dance festival, in competition with other schools across the North West. Students are signed up through their schools, on condition they agree that they will not partake in smoking, drinking or drugs.

Drugs and Alcohol: The group are working in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) to commission some research on the availability and use of Benzodiazepines. It seems the trend at the moment to use these drugs along with alcohol. The group was informed that these drugs are freely available to order in 1,000's over the Internet and received in the post. This is a very dangerous drug and we will be working with all of the appropriate agencies to develop an action plan to tackle the problem.

1.2 TRUSTEEL PROPERTIES

A meeting has been arranged between members of the working group and the consultants to ensure residents are involved in any decision-making regarding the contractors. A timetable will be drawn up shortly and phase one should start by late spring.

1.3 JOINT WORKING

Cumbria Sub Regional housing Group are working on a Cumbria wide housing strategy, officers from each of the districts are meeting on a

regular basis to progress this work and where possible are working to a common methodology, for example housing needs surveys are being undertaken by each LA and a framework is being used that has been agreed by all LA's, this will make comparisons between our districts much easier.

Copeland and Allerdale councils are now working more closely particularly in the housing department. We are working jointly on HMO licensing, older persons strategies, empty property strategies and the like rather than preparing them separately.

1.4 CARELINE

The Careline Service was successfully transferred to Attendo Response on 3 January 06. Councillors are reminded that the agreement with Attendo states that the existing service levels will be maintained for two years and that Attendo will not increase the current prices above the rate of inflation before that period and in any event without prior consultation with the Council. Contact numbers and staffing remain the same as under Council control.

1.5 HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL

As previously reported, the Housing Market Renewal Prospectus was submitted in the autumn to the Regional Housing Board. The RHB met with local partners in December to give feedback and this was largely positive. It was also indicated to the team that Furness and West Cumbria would probably be in line for additional funding, subject to government spending reviews, beyond the initial two-year period that is the subject of the current prospectus. For Copeland this holds out the possibility of securing additional funding to advance work not only in Whitehaven but also in Distington, Frizington, Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom.

A final decision is expected in February to allow partners time to develop a delivery plan to draw down funding from April 2006. West Lakes Renaissance Board will have overall responsibility for delivery of the programme.

1.6 Housing Act 2004 – Anti Social Behaviour

As part of the ongoing campaign against anti-social behaviour a number of the provisions contained in the Housing Act 2004 are now in force:

Suspension of the Right To Mutual Exchange – landlords can now block applications for mutual exchanges on grounds of anti social behaviour.

Suspension of the Right to Buy – Landlords can refuse to grant anti social tenants the Right to Buy. In the past action against nuisance tenants has been frustrated by tenants who exercise the Right to Buy.

2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

None

3. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

None