

Full Council Report

The report follows the same format of replicating and reporting against the priority themes identified in the Council's Corporate Plan.

This highlights to Members the progress we are making towards achieving our strategic objectives.

Creating and Sustaining a Healthy Economy

South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management – Leader/Environmental and Cultural Portfolio

Neighbourhood Management is concerned with residents working in partnership with the Local Authority, businesses, voluntary and community sectors, in order to make local service providers more aware and responsive to the needs of their local community. However, Neighbourhood Management does not involve large amounts of money, instead it looks to make existing budgets work more effectively.

The South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management team was formed between October 2006 and January 2007, with the Neighbourhood Manager in post in mid October. This is a relatively new team, which is presently based in the council offices, but the community centre at Mirehouse will be their permanent base after the relocation has taken place in mid February. Hot desk facilities will be maintained within the Copeland Regeneration Department.

The South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management team reports to a board, which has been given delegated powers by Copeland Borough Council. At this time, the board includes local residents, Copeland Borough Councillors, County Councillors and a faith representative; a voluntary sector representative will shortly be recruited.

The Neighbourhood Management board has also agreed to fund a Community Engagement worker, who will work closely with South Whitehaven residents. The Board has an allocation of £412,000 for this financial year and as well as granting money to specific bids, the board has created a Community Pot, from which local groups can apply for smaller amounts of money.

This scheme has been very successful and has funded a wide range of applications from health projects to projects that work with young people as well as improving community facilities. At a recent board meeting a number of projects were approved that will ultimately improve the quality of life for South Whitehaven residents. These projects include a Neighbourhood Warden scheme, a Fire and Rescue Community Safety project, bids that propose improved lighting within a number of areas within South Whitehaven, an application that would improve access to a sports facility for those who are disabled and vulnerable, an improved local bus service and an application that proposes working with a local school to use their building for community

use. All of these projects link into the themes outlined in the South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management delivery plan.

Enterprise Development Programme - Business Growth

Five staff have been appointed to work in deprived wards in Allerdale and Copeland. A two-day induction programme will be carried out on 1st and 2nd February.

The three staff to be based in Copeland will be located at the Cleator Moor Business Centre and Mirehouse Employment Support Project offices.

Employment Sites Review – Business Growth

In addition to the planned improvements to Leconfield Industrial Estate, Cleator Moor, plans are being developed for an extension to Bridge End Industrial Estate, in Egremont. Negotiations are taking place to acquire additional land for industrial development purposes, in partnership with West Lakes Renaissance.

Inward Investment – Business Growth

The new working group set up to share enquiries and encourage partnership working is to meet on the 13 February, in the newly established Invest in Cumbria Office on Westlakes Science and Technology Park. Graham McWilliam will be the Council's representative on the Group.

Graduate Placement Programme – Business Growth

A mail shot to local businesses will be distributed with business rate bills in March 2007. This will be a key element within the marketing campaign, which is designed to encourage Copeland businesses to employ graduates and undergraduates to work on placement projects.

Egremont Market Town Initiative – Business Growth

Alongside the Market Town Initiative programme, the MTI office is also implementing elements of the Egremont Mini-Masterplan within the West Lakes Renaissance funded programme of projects.

Progress is continuing on the £1.3m Gateway project to improve the entrances to the town, illuminate the castle and the car parking and access to the surrounding countryside. All funding has been agreed and offers accepted.

Environment Cumbria is currently carrying out detailed design work. It is intended to have five of the leisure cycling and walking routes substantially completed for the end of March this year.

There has been a good early response to the competition for ideas for the lighting of the castle. The competition is for under 18s and runs until the end of half term, 24 February. Forms are available from Lowes Court and the library and have been distributed to all local schools. Other arts work includes

the Egremont FM community radio station which will run on Friday to Sunday for four weekends from 16 February. There is an open day at the Young Cumbria Youth Centre from 3pm-6pm on Saturday 10 February. A design ideas competition has been commissioned through RIBA for designs for a demountable pavilion for performances and events at the castle.

An application for additional funding of buildings grants for the conservation area in the Town Centre to bring disused buildings back into use has been approved, by West Lakes Renaissance. This will enable an additional four buildings to be upgraded and reused, helping to rid the town of its most obvious blight.

Empty and semi-derelict buildings are the major problem of the otherwise attractive main street in Egremont and bringing them back into use will provide space for over twenty jobs to be created.

A Marketing and Tourism Officer has been recruited. The new post-holder will begin on the 5 March and will be responsible for promoting both the town and the regeneration work, so that the best possible impact can be gained from the current investment in the town.

Coalfields – Economic Infrastructure

It is great to announce the performance of Copeland within the Coalfields budget. Just less than £12 million has been secured for projects that will or have benefited the economic, environmental or social well being of our communities.

These projects include – £1.6 million for the North West Coalfields Community
 £5.5 million for Haig / Coastal Fringe
 £3.5 million Coalfield Regeneration Trust and more

Nuclear – CoWRM Report – Leader

The Council responded to the CoRWM repository implementation proposals – just to highlight the main issues within our response –

- Partnership process including community packages should apply to interim storage of radwaste as well as a repository
- Community packages should apply to existing nuclear storage sites as well as new ones.
- Partnerships put together by potential volunteer communities to assess the potential of agreement in a local area should be agreed in their nature by both the local democratic body that would be required to ratify the final decision and by the national overseeing body.

- A geological filtering process should proceed in parallel with a process of volunteering so that appropriate disposal facilities are available as soon as possible.
- For the purpose of volunteering communities should be defined by Travel to Work Areas.
- We strongly support Corwm's recommendation that decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level.

Whitehaven Town Centre – Deputy Leader

1. Hotel Development

The 'TRI' report, looking at demand for a quality 4 star hotel in Whitehaven, was completed at the end of November.

The consultants are now working up a proposal to attract an 'end user' to the project which is expected to take around 4 months to achieve. Partners are now looking to put a funding package together to pay for this next stage of the project.

2. Car Parking

Celia McKenzie organised a further meeting with District and County Council representatives on 7th December to start the development of a car parking strategy for Whitehaven. The group considered recent data on traffic flows and car park usage. It is hoped to involve the major retailers in further meetings.

3. Transport Study

Following the survey work undertaken in October 2006, a draft report was issued by the County Council in December. A large number of comments have been received which has caused the seminar planned for February 2007 to be postponed until all responses have been considered.

4. Business Liaison Officer

CBC Executive has approved a contribution towards the salary of the new post, from Local Authority Business Growth Initiative funding. Further discussion needs to take place with West Lakes Renaissance regarding the linkages with the Whitehaven Delivery Team, due to be established later this year.

5. Development Sites

The sub group has examined the planning position relating to the sites identified in the Sea Change Study. They will look at the proposals contained in the Implementation Plan when it is issued before looking at proposals to attract a development partner for the town centre.

The report produced will go to the Executive on 1 March

Transport – Economic Infrastructure

A Parton / Lillyhall exhibition will be held on the 23 / 24 Feb at the Distington Parish Hall which any interested party is welcome to attend. As members will have noticed, the work on the bypass has started which is great news for all those who worked tirelessly for this scheme.

The portfolio holder has also written to the Leader of Cumbria County Council requesting clarification on the budget agreed to be ringfenced for the de-trunked part of the A595. As the County council is recommending cuts to the highways budgets we need to know how and where this will affect the roads in Copeland and need to ensure that the A595 money is not top sliced to compensate for budget reductions elsewhere throughout the County.

Quality of Life

Homelessness – Housing & Community Safety

The number of applications has reduced over the last two months as the number of housing option assessments which are used to try and prevent homelessness has increased. We only have one applicant in B&B and now have an extra property from a private landlord.

As you are all aware we are working with our partners to try and prevent homelessness wherever possible. With this in mind, officers from Copeland and Allerdale made a joint bid to the DCLG for extra funding for mediation. I am pleased to be able to tell you the bid was successful and we received £30,000 for West Cumbria. This will be used to fund mediation where it is most needed, in particular with young people who need support to stay at home.

Cumbria Housing Strategy -Housing & Community Safety

The action plan for Copeland, which was requested by Government Office, is now completed and will be presented to the OSC social shortly. The housing market assessments are also almost completed and will be consulted on during early spring.

Private sector stock condition survey - Housing & Community Safety

1000 properties throughout the Borough will be surveyed during February/March. The results will help to develop our housing strategy and policy on private sector housing/empty properties. Members have been given an information sheet which should answer any questions residents may have. There has been some confusion with regard to the purpose of the survey. Can I reiterate the survey is to inform our housing strategy and support bids to government for additional finance to improve housing conditions within Copeland.

Violent Crime Task Group - Housing & Community Safety

The Nightsafe initiative messages are being delivered to the target audience – education – enforcement and treatment. The Police have a high visibility presence in all town centres at weekends but Workington and Whitehaven are the two main areas where problems arise and the Pub Watch scheme has probably been one of the major achievements the Partnership has in place.

Structured multi agency visits take place in all pubs and clubs across the district jointly with the Police, Fire and Rescue and Local Authority staff.

Copeland was congratulated on their success with the issue of premise licences. However they were weak in the areas of discipline in licence enforcement.

There have been issues about the numbers of young people presenting at the A/E Department over the Christmas period, particularly those under the age of 16 with alcohol related issues. This is being driven by the Public Health Department who will be working more closely with A/E Services and Domestic Violence Groups.

Community Safety Task Group - Housing & Community Safety

Burglary

The Homesafe scheme is going from strength to strength. And we are looking to develop this further. The Smartwater scheme is being considered for Kells/Woodhouse. "No cold-calling" scheme in Seascale already proving to be a success, and we have had no further incidents since the scheme was introduced in June 2006. Funding has been sought to improve street lighting at South Whitehaven and some of the initiatives being looked at by the Group impact on other Task Groups.

Burglary Other

Integration of night time economy into business crime. Radio link scheme in Whitehaven is working well and discussing possibility of West Cumberland Hospital coming into BAC.

Drugs and Alcohol Task Group - Housing & Community Safety

There are a number of key issues – linking with Probation Service/Prolific and Priority Offenders/Prison Services/Registered Social Landlords. Housing is becoming more and more of a problem and more work needs to be done to address alcohol abuse and supported housing schemes.

Civic Amenity Provision – Environmental & Cultural Services

Members may be aware that the current planning approval for Cumbria County Council's Civic Amenity site at Frizington is due to expire at the end of March. Members may also be aware that the County has been looking at two options for a re-placement site for some time, one at Moresby Parks and the other on the former Rhodia site in Whitehaven and both options are still being pursued. However there are currently objections to the Rhodia option and difficulties with the landowner at Moresby, meaning that a replacement site could take some considerable time to be built. Cumbria CC are also looking to re-site the Clay Flatts CA site at Workington to a larger site across the road and hoped to have that in progress before the Frizington site closed. It was anticipated that planners would look favourably on an application to extend the Frizington site if the Clay Flatts replacement was already in progress. However there are also objections to that proposed site so the future is uncertain. It is hoped that the way forward will become clearer later this month when the planning application for the new Clay Flatts site is heard.

Cleaner Safer Greener – Leader / Environmental & Cultural Services

The South Whitehaven Waste Projects have now bedded in and are having a positive impact on the area. The mechanical sweeper is working on a regular schedule so that each of the estates within South Whitehaven is mechanically swept once a week. Previously the frequency of cleaning would have been fortnightly at best and monthly in most cases. New metal litter bins have been purchased and will be sited in the coming weeks in locations where bins have gone missing or have been damaged. A 3-4 week project clearing verges, open areas, part of the cycleway, and some small wooded areas will take place in February. The Waste Awareness Officer has started working with a number of schools and has delivered a waste awareness assembly at St Beghs School, and classroom sessions at Hensingham Primary School, and Monkway Junior School. A Copeland specific recycling magazine for children has been produced and has proven popular with the schools. In addition, using training given by enforcement colleagues, the Environmental Nuisance Team found evidence in some litter that led to a fixed penalty fine being issued to the offender.

Leisure Services - Environmental & Cultural Services

The new soft play area at Whitehaven Sports Centre is due to open on 10th February; the refurbished fitness areas will be ready for use on Monday 19th February with a preview on 18th February. Fitness users will be the first to receive the new Copeland Access to Leisure (CAL) card due to be launched fully on 1st April.

All the 700 children on the swimming lesson programme at Copeland Swimming Pool now get free swimming during public times as part of the new “Better Swimmers Sooner” learn to swim programme.

The visit of Germaine Greer to the Civic Hall on January 27th was very successful, attracting an interested audience of around 120. Well known art critic Brian Sewell is at the Civic on 17th March, as the programme continues to broaden.

Culture - Environmental & Cultural Services -

An exhibition showcasing the work of the Millom Writers took place in St. George’s Church at the beginning of January. This event attracted over 200 visitors and resulted in positive press coverage at both local and national magazine level.

An Urban Arts Project has been launched at St. Peter’s Parish Hall in Kells. This project is targeted at young people and the initial response has been excellent. In addition, the Greenbank Youth Theatre Project that was started last year by Arts Development staff has been re-located to Whitehaven Civic Hall as it continues to go from strength to strength.

The first meeting of a Sports and Physical Activity Alliance (SPAA) group for the Copeland Borough Council area took place on Tuesday 16th January 2007

at the Whitehaven Civic Hall. The SPAA aims to bring together a number of partner agencies, for example education, health, neighbourhood management, the local strategic partnership, youth offender agencies, facility providers, crime and disorder reduction partnership; with a remit to identify joint priorities. A range of projects are then developed to assist in tackling joint issues, with a limited amount of match funding being available from Sport England. The first session, facilitated by Cumbria Sport, attracted an excellent attendance and a second meeting is planned for mid February.

On the 5th January a Basketball Camp was run by Copeland and Allerdale Sports Development Officers. This attracted over 30 young people who participated in coaching and competition. The event was successful, with positive coverage being received from the Whitehaven News, the Times and Star, and Border Television.

Valley School – cross connection – Health & Diversity

Officers from the Environmental Health Department have been working closely with the Environment Agency to assist them with identifying sources of contamination in Pow Beck. They have recently discovered a significant cross connection at the Valley School in Mirehouse. A cross connection is where foul water is incorrectly connected into a surface water sewer. In this instance sewage from the school was discharging into and contaminating Pow Beck. This wrong connection has now been rectified and this will help to improve the quality of the Water in Pow Beck. The Environment Agency are working with the Cleaner Safer Greener South Whitehaven programme to deliver these sewer connection improvements.

Bank Head Estate - Environmental & Cultural Services

Officers from the Environmental Health Department have been working with residents and the prison service to solve flooding and maintenance problems on the Bank Head Estate in Haverigg. The Bank Head estate is a private estate adjacent to the prison with complicated drainage arrangements and a history of flooding. Thanks to Officer involvement it now looks as if the prison service and the residents are close to making an agreement in respect of the maintenance.

Adoption of Sewers in Orgill Estate, Egremont - Environmental & Cultural Services -

Work is underway to investigate the feasibility of forwarding the sewers on the Orgill estate for adoption by United Utilities. Consultants Royal Haskoning have just completed a network analysis of the estate looking at the layout and capacity of the sewers. These results will be used by the Council's Flood and Coastal Defence Engineer to determine which sections of the estate require upgrading prior to submission to United Utilities.

Environmental Enforcement - . Environmental & Cultural Services -

The Council concluded a successful prosecution in the courts for illegal dumping of household waste at the Egremont recycling site last year. The offender, from Bigrigg was fined by the courts £75 and a further £50 costs were awarded on the 18th January. In addition to date, more than 60 littering fines have been issued this financial year. In particular this quota included 6 where people have thrown litter from their cars, the source of a significant amount of litter on our road verges. Focus on the abuse of the recycling sites is continuing with covert surveillance of the worst effected sites. The Enforcement Unit is also working with the Council's Environmental Health team to tackle traders in the towns who overfill their bins and are causing health concerns with cooking oil and food waste being incorrectly stored.

Blooming Mount Pleasant - Environmental & Cultural Services -

The Parks Department are working in partnership with the Whitehaven in Bloom group to clean up the landscape environment around Mount Pleasant. The main clean-up work is being undertaken by prisoners from Haverigg Prison with support and input from the Green & Clean team.

The works undertaken includes the clearing and tidying of the area, strimming down the overgrown areas, digging over and planting of the formal garden area, and the washing of the steps.

Leading Horticultural Trainee Scheme Environmental & Cultural Services -

The Councils Horticultural Trainee scheme was showcased as an excellent example of good practices at the Green Space North West Horticultural Apprenticeship on the 9 February. A presentation was given to over 45 local authorities highlighting the development and success of the Councils Horticultural Training scheme.

Members may recall that Horticultural Trainee, Katie Trohear was judged the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Horticultural Trainee of the year in 2004

A Well Managed Council Striving for Excellence

Process Improvement Team – Deputy Leader

The Process Improvement Team has been working within Revenues and Benefits, Waste Management, Finance, and Customer Services over the last few months on a range of projects. Many of these have now entered the implementation phase including:

- Within Benefits, the process has been changed so that a client coming to the Copeland Centre with a new claim or a complex query is seen by a Benefits Assessor. This is giving benefits both in reduced times to process new claims and in perceived levels of customer service.
- A review of the concessionary travel voucher issue process has devised a new way of working within the Council. This is currently being rolled out to support the 2007/08 voucher issue, as well as facilitating the extended scheme, where senior citizens are able to select a rail card as their concessionary travel option. The new process should prove more effective and efficient for the Council and residents, as well as reducing the potential for errors.
- The One Stop Shop project is working to support the sharing of information across the Council, to give customers improved service – they should only need to inform the Council once of any change in circumstances.
- Projects within Waste Services are working to introduce efficiencies and better process control by re-engineering the commercial waste process and the street cleansing operation.

Performance Improvement – Deputy Leader

The CoValent system was used for the first time in February to report on the Council's performance. The Corporate Plan and the Performance Indicators were updated by managers directly into CoValent, and the report was produced centrally. This automation saved a significant amount of officer time. Information on the Council's progress is available to anyone with a connection to the network.

Noise at Work – Health and Diversity

The Noise at Work Regulations 2005 came partially into effect in April 2006 and replaced the 1989 Regulations. The Regulations are jointly enforced by the Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities. At present the Regulations do not apply to the entertainment industry but will do so from 1 April 2008.

In an attempt to both help the entertainment industry in Copeland and to reduce, it is hoped, demands on the Council when the Regulations start to apply to places of entertainment, the Council has written to all places of entertainment (currently 166 premises and consisting mainly of pubs and clubs) in Copeland giving advice about the Regulations and seeking information about what steps have been taken and/or are proposed to ensure compliance with the Regulations. At present most of the work connected with this initiative is being carried out by a Student Environmental Health Officer

who is currently attached to the Council, on an unpaid basis, to acquire the necessary practical training she requires as part of her MSc course.

Contact Dermatitis – Health and Diversity

Contact Dermatitis is one of the conditions included in the National Disease Reduction Programme – a joint initiative of the Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities. This Council's involvement in the initiative commenced last year when all of the floristry businesses were visited and given advice on how to prevent persons working in the businesses from contracting Contact Dermatitis (Persons working in the floristry business are particularly susceptible to contracting the condition.) Another industry in which workers are particularly susceptible to contracting the condition is the hairdressing industry and, therefore, all hairdressers are now being targeted as part of the Council's initiative. To date 29 out of the 57 currently existing hairdressing businesses in Copeland have been visited by officers of the Council's Environmental Health Section. The visits are being combined with programmed routine health and safety inspections so as to reduce the burden on both the businesses and the Council. A newsletter is to go soon to all hairdressers in the borough advising them, amongst other things, of the benefits which have accrued so far from the initiative.

Property – Resources and Local Democracy

The Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy (2005 - 2006) was approved by Executive in January.

The Property section has contributed towards fitting of a Mosquito device at Cleator Moor Square in conjunction with the Crime and Disorder officer, Police and Town Council. The device has been installed to deter groups of youths congregating in the area - it emits sound waves that are inaudible to adults.

IT – Resources and Local Democracy

Work is ongoing to install the new telephones at Moresby, and to install the additional screens in the revenues and benefits section.

Shared Service agenda - a draft business plan is taking shape and will be shared with staff once there is sufficient information included.

Procurement - work is ongoing with the IdeA to establish the Quick Start marketplace for beginning of April.

Parish and Town Council Charter - Resources and Local Democracy

The consultation period for the draft charter is now complete and useful comments have been received from a wide range of stakeholders. Representatives from Copeland Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) have now met and agreed the content of an amended charter in light of the consultation. As part of that process a Parish Plan Protocol has been considered and it is felt this could usefully form an appendix to the charter.

The intention is that once approved Copeland Borough Council, Cumbria County Council, CALC and individual Local Councils will sign up to the Charter. The Lake District National Park has indicated that they are unwilling to sign up to Charters in any of the Districts across Cumbria at the moment but ourselves and CALC will continue to work to get them included in the future.

I anticipate the next steps to be the revised Charter and protocol will go to the County Councils Area Committee on 22nd March and CBC Executive on 3rd April for approval followed by an official launch later in the year.

Local Government White Paper – Resources and Local Democracy

A Better Governance Group for Cumbria has been set up with senior representatives from each of the Districts, our representatives are Liam Murphy and Hilary Mitchell. The remit of the group is to manage the Districts proposal for unitary council. The councils working group is actively involved in this process and all members and employees are receiving a weekly update.

A verbal update on progress will be given at the meeting.