

Executive Report to Full Council – 6 December 2012

Strategic Leadership and Nuclear Portfolio – Councillor Elaine Woodburn

Budget Consultation

As members know we are presently carrying out our budget consultation which has resulted in quite a poor response, although signs are that this is slightly improving due to raising awareness through public drop ins. Meetings with user groups of facilities that may potentially close have been held and generally people are very understanding of the cuts but don't like them, a feeling recognised by all members. The closing date isn't until the 7th December so there is still time for people to have their say.

Flooding

Copeland has suffered numerous incidents of flooding over the last four months which has resulted in over 130 properties being directly affected, some have now flooded on three occasions. We are leading a multi disciplinary team, which seeks both to meet the welfare needs of affected residents, and includes organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Law Centre, two organisations that the Council supports, the PCT, housing etc., and others. The Red Cross, kindly funded by Sellafield have also worked directly with residents and will continue to do so, whilst the need remains. The Flood Investigation Group, consisting of Cumbria County Council, The Environment Agency and United Utilities have investigated all flood incidents across Copeland and reports are now being pulled together with action plans.

Egremont has been worst affected, and the agencies are currently investigating short and medium term flood mitigation measures whilst a permanent, longer term solution to the drainage issues is designed and funding sought - but this is not guaranteed. There is no easy answer to some of these problems and long term solutions can be only be resourced through funding from Government through regional agencies, which at present requires significant locally sourced matched funding.

Thanks must go to our workforce who have and are still playing a significant role in helping those who have flooded. We also like to thank Sellafield for providing additional Project Management Resource during this difficult and testing period, and all partner agencies for their continued commitment and support.

Unitary Authorities

An initial meeting was held with all Cumbrian Leaders to discuss the potential for unitary authorities. All districts are in differing positions with some not supporting unitaries at all i.e. Barrow and others such as South Lakes ready and willing to make the financial commitment estimated to be £10,000 per authority to investigate unitary options.

There was a consensus from all Leaders that a unitary Cumbria was not the favoured option and all agreed that they did not support a single unitary authority. With the CCC elections looming the agreed way forward was that individual budget processes had to have priority, so further debate would be held after May.

Nuclear Issues

Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership

Following the Special Council meeting on 26th September, where Members debated the opinions from the final report of the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership, the intention was that a meeting of Executive on 11th October would have considered a report on whether to participate or not in the next stage of the process, Stage 4, which starts the search for a site. However the three decision making bodies, Copeland, Allerdale and Cumbria County Councils considered that they needed more time to consider a number of issues and have further discussions with Government around putting the process on a legal footing, community benefits and geology. A 3 month deferral of the decision to participate has therefore been agreed and the plan is to consider a report at a special meeting of the Executive on 30th Jan. Both Allerdale Borough and Cumbria County Councils are still planning to hold their own decision making meetings on the same day.

Nuclear New Build

Site characterisation works have now commenced at Moorside by NuGeneration Ltd which is the first stage of assessing the site's suitability for the development a new nuclear power station. The Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) which ensures that the resource implications for the Councils of responding to the development consent process are identified and provided for is now ready for signature. NuGeneration Ltd and their advisors continue to work up their initial plans around transport and accommodation.

North West Coast Connections

In May National Grid (NG) commenced a consultation process around potential strategic route options for upgrading the electricity network to take the power generated from the Moorside project, and other power generating activities in Copeland and elsewhere in Cumbria, to the national market. The consultation process included a Members briefing by officials from National Grid on 20th June and a Borough Council initial response to the consultation exercise was subsequently agreed at a meeting of the Executive on 10th July prior to formal submission to National Grid. This Stage 1 consultation sought views on six strategic route options and closed in July.

On the 23rd October, NG published the Strategic Options Report (SOR) and Consultation Feedback Report (CFR). The SOR provides details of how NG appraised the six strategic options. The CFR outlines the responses received to the Stage 1 consultation and explains how NG has taken them into account in choosing the Preferred Strategic Option(s). Copies

of both documents are available on the National Grid website. The two preferred Strategic Options to be taken forward by NG are Option 3a and 4a.

Option 3a is a sub-option of the original option 3 (Cumbria Ring Onshore South – One double-circuit overland north from Moorside and one double-circuit overland south). It is seen to be an economically viable solution with significant technical advantages through the provision of an additional north-south transmission route and by allowing for future connections in both north and south Cumbria. NG's appraisal concludes that careful mitigation and routing along the existing Electricity North West overhead line corridor could reduce environmental and socio-economic impacts to acceptable levels.

Option 4a is a sub-option of the original Option 4 (Cumbria Ring Offshore South – One double-circuit overland north from Moorside and one double-circuit offshore south). The offshore circuit to the south would avoid onshore environmental and socio-economic constraints in South Lakeland. Although the offshore element of the route could impact on designated marine and coastal sites, there would be a greater opportunity to mitigate the impacts from one double-circuit than two. Technical advantages would be gained from the opportunity for future grid connections in north Cumbria. However, there are technical difficulties and higher costs associated with the offshore element of this route.

At Stage 2, the search areas derived from these two Strategic Options, within which the draft route corridor and siting options will be located, will be known as:

- North West Coast Ring East (search area onshore north from Moorside and onshore south, around Morecambe Bay);
- North West Coast Ring Central (search area onshore north from Moorside and onshore south, across Morecambe Bay); and
- North West Coast Ring West (search area onshore north from Moorside and offshore south).

During Stage 2 of the Project, the outline route corridor and siting options will be determined. This process will involve the identification of possible route and siting options and the subsequent appraisal of them. Community and stakeholder consultation on the outline routing and siting options will take place from May to August 2013. The preferred route corridors and sites will be announced in November 2013.

Again the resource implications for the Council from the engagement with National Grid are the subject of a Planning Performance Agreement which is now agreed and signed by participating local authorities across Cumbria and Lancashire.

Sellafield Ltd

On the 7th November 2012 the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report into the findings of an assessment undertaken by the NAO to judge the challenges faced in cleaning up Sellafield. The publication of the report received widespread national and international media coverage and whilst the report acknowledges progress has been made it did conclude however, that significant uncertainties and scheduling risks remain, for example, there is

considerable uncertainty over the time required and cost of completing facilities to treat and store highly radioactive material held in deteriorating legacy ponds and silos. On the 26th November 14 MPs from the House of Commons – the Public Accounts Committee - visited the site to take evidence about its performance and held its own evidence gathering session in public into the NAO’s findings. The public accounts committee will examine all aspects of NAO report and decide whether taxpayers’ money is being spent effectively

Finance and Resources Portfolio – Councillor Gillian Troughton

Mine shaft slippage update

The Gillfoot mine shaft collapse – work has been on-going to stabilise the position, secure the site and agree the next steps

Our property team – led by Martyn Morton are working tirelessly to ensure that public safety is ensured and to develop the best solution to the slippage. This work is progressing.

We have enabled residents to have controlled access to their properties so they can collect important personal belongings, mementos and documents.

We have also told residents that we think remedial work is likely to take around six weeks to complete, though we will do all that we can to reduce this time to the practical minimum.

We realise that this is a very difficult and upsetting time for residents who have been evacuated, and we are doing all that we can to support them. We are continuing to provide this support to residents who have been evacuated, which has included:

- Providing alternative accommodation or guidance on alternative accommodation
- Support to deal with welfare issues
- Signposting to other advice services

This work is being led by Louise Coid in Environmental Health

Performance and Transformation Portfolio – Councillor John Bowman

Human Resources

- The HR processes associated with the workforce implications of the budget savings proposals have commenced. 112 “At Risk” letters have been distributed to employees affected, and the Dept of Business Innovation & Skills and the Trades Unions have been notified of the 42 potential redundancies. Formal consultation with the Unions has started, and a forward programme of meetings arranged. The Stage 1 support package for employees has been made available.
- Our attendance performance has shown a slight improvement in September. Close attention to attendance management is still required, since current achievement

would translate into an average figure for the full year of 10.06 working days per employee lost to sickness absence, against a target of 8.

- Changes are being implemented in both Payroll and HR procedures to reflect the introduction of “Auto-enrolment” of employees into the Local Government Pension Scheme, as required by Government policy.
- Following a joint tendering exercise with other Cumbrian District Councils, the contract to provide occupational health services has again been awarded to WellWork, who will continue to support our efforts to ensure that we improve the health of our workforce.

Housing, Planning and Community Safety Portfolio – Councillor George Clements

Planning

Planning Policy

It has been an incredibly busy few months for the Planning Policy function. There are currently 4 documents at various stages of preparation:

- Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD – This document was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination on the 31st October and the examination process has now formally started. There will be a public hearing in late February but the exact dates for this are not yet known. The DPD, and all the supporting evidence, is available on the Council’s website. Hard copies of the DPD are also available in the libraries, Council offices etc.
- Whitehaven Town Centre and Harbourside SPD – This document has already been adopted by the Council. Officers brought some very minor amendments to the last LDF Working Party and these were approved. The SPD has now been printed and distributed to all the deposit locations.
- South Whitehaven SPD – Officers have been working with Story Homes on the production of a SPD to guide the development of a large housing site South of Woodhouse. A draft of the SPD has been approved by the LDF Working Party to go out to consultation from 12th November.
- West Whitehaven SPD – This document is in the very early stages of production. The Issues and Options Draft was brought to the last LDF Working Party and approval was given for it to be published for consultation on the same date, 12th November.
- The consultations for the South and West Whitehaven SPDs will run in tandem and the closing date for all comments on both SPDs will be the 21st December. The

documents have been distributed to all the libraries, Council offices, the Beacon etc. and are available on the website. Two 'drop-in' consultation sessions were held on the 29th November at St Peters Community Hall and the 6th December at Kells Library. These gave members of the public the chance to talk to officers about the SPDs and provide their comments. In addition there was a consultation session for Borough and County Councillors on 30th November in the Bainbridge Room.

Planning Application Fees

The Government has been considering an increase in fees for planning applications or the alternative of allowing for local setting of fees for the last two years. Fees were last increased in February 2010. Whilst considerable preparatory work was undertaken, the Government was dissuaded from introducing locally set fees apparently as a consequence of fears that developer funding of the full cost of handling planning applications would act as a further disincentive to development.

Instead, it has been decided to implement a blanket 15% increase in fees for planning applications with effect from 22 November 2012. This brings the cost of submission of applications much closer to the true cost of handling an application by the Council, but it is recognised that the increase does not result in the planning application process becoming self-funding.

The increase is of course welcomed as it will bring additional fee income to support the operation of a statutory service. A 15% increase is estimated to bring additional income of between £25-30,000 per annum, although some caution needs to be applied as the number of applications submitted remains difficult to accurately forecast. The fee for a domestic extension would increase from £150 to £172 and for a new dwelling from £335 to £385.

When appropriate it is considered that the Council should lobby for the ability to set fees locally, and subject to nationally agreed performance criteria, be able to seek full cost recovery for the delivery of the development management service.

Housing

- There has been an increase in the number of repossession letters received by the Housing Options team which is an indication of the number of people in arrears with their mortgage.
- There has been an increase in the number of single men under 35 approaching the team for assistance. The majority do not have a priority need, many are concerned that they can no longer afford to rent privately due to changes in Housing Benefit. The proposals from the government which suggest housing benefit for under 25's may be stopped are giving us great concern.

- Homelessness has been prevented on 23 occasions during the first six months of the year, an increase on last year's figures.
- A young person's panel has been established which will be chaired by housing options staff; this will be used to try and help young people.
- A rough sleeper's estimate was undertaken on 2 November with the help of statutory and voluntary agencies in Copeland, there were no rough sleepers in Copeland on the night in question.
- A cold weather emergency protocol has been developed, this means that should there be any rough sleepers in Copeland during periods of severe cold weather they will be offered temporary accommodation.
- The number of referrals for DFG's continues to increase, there were 66 referrals during the first six months of the year, during 2010/11 there were 66 referrals during the full year, and this increase may be due to the increasing elderly population in Copeland.
- 21 inspections have been made to unfit properties within the private rented sector; officers are working with the landlords of these properties to ensure they are brought up to a decent standard.
- Officers have also inspected 40 properties to make sure they have no health and safety rating hazards so rent deposits can be given to the tenants who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

On 26 October 2012 the Department of Health announced a capital bidding round over a 5 year programme called the Care & Support Specialised Housing Fund. This is for older people and adults with disabilities and includes "extra care" housing. The first bid round closes on 18 January 2013. It is particularly important for Copeland because our housing market assessment of 2011 demonstrated that we need to increase the range of housing options for older people. Officers have had initial discussions with providers and we shall be making the case for investment in Copeland.

On newbuild affordable housing more generally, we now have confirmation that 16 affordable homes for rent will be built in Whitehaven for Two Castles Housing Association in 2013/14. Plans are also well advanced for 14 new homes for rent in Bootle by Impact Housing Association, which are likely to be completed in 2014.

Housing investment, of course, meets people's needs and also supports the local economy.

Home Group – Looking Local

Looking Local is an exciting new way for customers to communicate with Home Group using digital TV, ipad, smart phones or even through Nintendo wii.

Customers can find out local news, events, contact details and even report a repair or request a rent statement through their TV. As over 90% of customers have digital TV, this is a great way for people who don't have access to the internet to get in touch with them.

It's really easy to use, accessing Looking Local is as easy as changing the channel on the TV. Press the red button on the handset and select Home Group by typing in our quick code HGTV (keypad numbers 4485).

With over 8,000 hits on the Looking Local channel since its launch Home Group are publicising it through their customer newsletters.

Community Safety

CCTV – Millom

As the Council consults on its budget plans some events are progressing outside of our control. In relation to our CCTV infrastructure the impact of the closure of police stations is being particularly felt. Following the closure of Cleator Moor station earlier this year Millom has now followed suit. The Police Station in the town was closed on 23rd October 2012. Having been given just 48hours notice officers arranged for the broadband and phone connections for the CCTV to be terminated and the CCTV equipment removed.

We are aware the use of mobile phone camera's and in-store systems are increasingly being used by the police in preference to fixed on street cameras. It is clear as technology has advanced our CCTV network is of limited value to our police colleagues.

Environment and Sustainability Portfolio – Councillor Allan Holliday

Christmas Lights – Egremont

The Egremont Christmas Lights have been transferred to the Egremont Amenity Group this year. The Council will support the group with grant aid for a 5 year period in an agreement consistent with that agreed with Millom Town Council last year. Our financial support has enabled the Amenity Group to source additional grant funding to improve the Towns Christmas Lights with the group now taking full responsibility for the provision and electricity costs.

Waste Rounds Re-Design

The Council's re-designed waste collection service came into effect on Monday 5 November. With around 75% of all waste and black box recycling collections being changed as a result the project seems to have been successfully delivered.

The new service, delivered by one fewer refuse vehicle than before, has led to the majority of Copeland's residents seeing a change in collection day for their refuse, green waste or black box recycling service. The waste teams delivering the service are also coping with change, as new rounds and routes have to be learned. Many are working in new teams or are carrying out collections in unfamiliar areas of the Borough. With change on such a scale a few teething problems are to be expected but these have been remarkably few.

The new collection calendars were designed, printed and distributed according to the project plan and importantly within budget. Although some people have reported not receiving calendars, there have been few genuine errors identified.

Whilst it may be too early to see the full impact of the change, anecdotal evidence suggests the change may have led to an increase in the number of recycling boxes being left for collection. The opposite however is true of the plastic & card service despite it remaining unchanged.

Following the 'go live' date the new criteria for large bins and assisted collections are being applied and work has begun to review existing arrangements against the new criteria. In addition letters have been sent to the first tranche of properties who have off-route collections. A number of follow-up site visits have already been carried out and suitable collection points agreed with residents.

Grass Cutting Home Group

As outlined in the Whitehaven News on 15 November Home Group have given notice to their tenants that they will be ceasing grass cutting of front gardens on open plan estates. The expectation is this will now be the tenants own responsibility as from the 1st April next year. The impact will be felt wider as some private householders in these estates have benefitted by having their grass cut as part of the frontages.

Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio – Councillor Phil Greatorex

Socio Economic

We have been in detailed discussions with private sector partners to engage their support into our apprenticeships programme and mentoring/ skills development schemes in schools. Both of these are critical to creating a pathway of support for young people to enable them to develop their skills and access training and employment. This work with the private sector also underpins our contribution to the Socio-Economic Planning Working Group with the Sellafield Supply Chain as we are increasingly able to show continuity across our Regeneration Plan, the Blueprint and the Framework Agreement Socio-Economic Plans. We will continue this as the next framework with ISA is developed with partners.

Economic Blueprint Implementation Plan

The Energy Coast Blueprint implementation plan has now been developed till March 2013 with a number of key priority projects in the short term. This will be considered at the next Board. The Energy Coast team are leading discussions for West Cumbria businesses and partners on Broadband priorities to enable local growth which will then be fed into the Cumbria LEP and the Cumbria Broadband initiative.

Whitehaven THI

In October, the Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme secured further match funding from Britain's Energy Coast against our Whitehaven THI application to Heritage Lottery Fund, which is being submitted next March 2013. The THI engagement programme with local businesses has started in earnest and is showing strong interest from building owners across the THI area. The aims of the THI scheme are to concentrate energies into a compact but strategically significant street that links two well-known landmarks (YMCA & Market Hall) that are very public barometers of the welfare of the town. By keeping a tight focus, the THI offers the opportunity to galvanise the business community of Market Street through common enterprise, and help rebalance the town's economic profile, reconnecting derelict land to the east, currently isolated from the town's core. A significant project in the THI is the Whitehaven Foyer project which is progressing its funding strategy and finalising the design in readiness for a planning submission.

Coastal Regeneration and Destination Management

The Coastal Partnership has published walking and cycling leaflets in conjunction with Cumbria Tourism's Adventure Capital. The leaflets cover 5 do-in-a-day rides along Copeland's coast and four heritage walks along the full stretch of coast from Parton to Millom. The aim behind the marketing is to draw visitors over to the Coast under Cumbria Tourism's Adventure Capital brand to help raise interest and awareness of the extent of the coastal offer as part of our Destination Management work. A brand new training course offered by West Cumbria Tourism called 'You're Welcome to the Western Lake District' was held last month in Whitehaven to help local businesses learn more about their area and become ambassadors for their town. The course has been developed to help local business people enhance their knowledge of the area and teach them more about how to inspire the visitors they meet, ultimately boosting business by encouraging visitors to stay longer,

experience more and return again soon. Eight Copeland businesses have taken advantage of the course so far, including two taxi drivers.

Copeland Apprenticeship Initiative

There are 51 apprentices currently active on the Copeland Apprenticeship Programme, all at different stages of their apprenticeship. Nine learners have now completed their training and these have been based with the following employers: Bleasdale Solicitors, Whitehaven Community Trust, Howgill Family Centre, PHX Training, Amec, Rosehill House, Mill Garage and Rosehill Theatre.

The first nine learners to complete their apprenticeship have all resulted in positive outcomes with five being offered contracts with their current employer, one gaining employment with a different employer, one undertaking an enhanced apprenticeship, one moving on to commence study at University and one remaining with their employer but in a voluntary capacity. We are currently on target to enable 60 young people to complete their apprenticeship training before the Programme comes to a close in March 2014.

A webpage is being developed that will provide an update on the scheme. This will include; Apprentice case studies, scheme achievements, employer/apprentice quotes, photos and a link to the full length version of the Copeland Apprenticeship Initiative DVD.

Coalfields Apprenticeship Scheme

Copeland Borough Council is supporting the Coalfields Apprenticeship scheme which has involved the creation of 20 Apprentices who are based in social enterprise and community anchor organisations. The Programme is aimed at individuals (aged 16 - 24) who reside in Copeland. This is a joint venture driven forward by Copeland's Work & Skills Partnership and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust

Numbers on the Coalfields scheme are static with 17 apprentices still active. Two apprentices have completed their apprenticeship with the remainder of the cohort due to complete before March 2013

Copeland Work & Skills Partnership

Members of Copeland's Work & Skills Partnership are currently developing initiatives such as a Youth Volunteer Programme aimed at supporting young people towards the labour market. Copeland's Youth Engagement Officer is providing support in terms of consultation with local young people. Initiatives are at the stage of trying to secure funding.

ESH Employability Programme

Support is being provided in developing an employability programme working alongside Esh Construction who approached the Council a number of months ago. A Programme of activity has now been confirmed and will be delivered to 140 Year 10 pupils based in Copeland secondary schools. The Programme will commence in January 2013 and consist of

workshops, checkpoints, guest speakers from local / regional businesses, mock interviews and work experience opportunities. The aim is to help young people understand what employers are looking for, what opportunities are available and how to increase their chances of securing employment.

Leisure Culture and Youth Portfolio – Councillor Hugh Branney

Beacon Update

Performance as a ‘Green’ Museum:

The Beacon has worked hard over the past 2 years to reduce its carbon footprint. Since its baseline data was established in 2009/10, Copeland’s “Greener Museum” has reduced its carbon footprint by 41%. In addition to energy savings, the Beacon team have also been tracking their business miles and personal commuting, water usage, refrigerant gas and air transport emissions.

Cumbria Sports Awards

The 2012 Cumbria Sports Awards were held at the Low Wood Hotel, Windermere on the evening of Friday 23rd November. Copeland Borough Council have supported the county wide awards for a number of years and continued to do so this year by sponsoring the Rising Star category, which was presented by Cllr Hugh Branney. England Rugby Union Head Coach Stuart Lancaster, was the most high profile winner picking up the Coach of the Year Accolade. After a strong showing in 2010 and ’11, there were no winners from Copeland at this year’s event, however Archer Alan Wills’ Olympic achievements were noted. Local Authority Sports Development departments and partners were thanked for supporting numerous projects such as Sports Makers, Community Games, Sportivate and the School Games, which have all be a resounding success and continue to help grow sports participation in the County.”