

**Executive Report to Full Council – 8 December 2009**

**Transformational Leadership**

**Flooding Event**

Cumbria's experience of flooding has been reported in depth in the local and national media over the last week or so. Copeland, fortunately, did not suffer the same extent of flooding as our neighbouring authority, Allerdale, but many incidents of flooding occurred in the Borough and individuals have been affected. The majority of incidents were reported in Bootle, Egremont, Cleator and Holmrook. Copeland Borough Council received requests for sandbags and over 2,500 were delivered and thanks should go to our employees who worked over the period to deliver them to residents in need.

As a Council, we have responded to the incidents in our neighbouring authorities and have helped them with communications, structural checks and equipment as well as making a donation to the Cumbria Flood Relief Fund.

The floods have had a major impact on the infrastructure that serves Copeland and through this recovery phase we need to work with our neighbours and partners (public and private sector) and lobby for infrastructure improvements.

More importantly, Copeland lost one of its residents to the floods and the Council has sent our sympathy and offer of support to the family of PC Bill Barker. Our thoughts remain with them at this extremely sad time.

**CP - Improve our financial management – Councillor Elaine Woodburn**

**Budget Preparation 2010/11**

Resource Planning Working Group (RPWG) has met regularly since July to develop the capital and revenue budget for 2010/11, set within the context of the medium term financial strategy. 2010/11 is the final year of the current three year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 2007) and budget settlement from central government.

Budget consultation with the public is in progress and the results will help RPWG develop budget options. RPWG received presentations from the Heads of Service at an all day meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> November, setting out their draft revenue budgets. The draft capital programme will be discussed at the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> December.

The budget process for 2010/11 has to be seen in the context of an expected reduction in overall funding from local government in the following CSR period, as

actions are taken to reduce public sector borrowing and to accommodate the reduction in tax revenues as a result of the economic recession.

The budget preparation process continues and meetings are scheduled for December, January and February. The Budget 2010/11 will be presented to Council in March.

## **CP - Improve our performance – Councillor John Bowman**

### **Comprehensive Area Assessment**

As many of you will be aware work on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) of the local authorities in Cumbria has been proceeding during the summer. This is a new experience for us, especially in dealing with a new assessment regime that focuses on local outcomes rather than a national prescribed template. The CAA includes a number of specific elements around our use of resources, managing performance and an organisational assessment. The Audit Commission will be publishing the CAA results for all authorities simultaneously on 10 December. The Copeland results will be reported to meetings of the Executive and Audit Committee in December. This is a reminder to all councillors that the Executive and Audit Committee are open to all members and these meetings will be an opportunity to gain an understanding of what the assessment says, how we are perceived to be performing by the Audit Commission and to understand first hand what we may need to improve.

**CP - Work effectively with others to meet the needs of Copeland – Councillor John Bowman**

**Connecting Communities – Cleator Moor**

Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council have taken the opportunity for one of our pilot locality areas to get additional engagement resources to assist partnership working with our communities. Cleator Moor and its local parishes (NE Copeland) have been selected as one of four fast track areas in the North West of England to undertake Intensive Local Engagement. The aim of Connecting Communities is for service providers and community leaders to work together to engage more deeply with communities, particularly where this has been unsuccessful in the past. Through this process the locality plan for North East Copeland will be updated and expanded, to cover needs and aspirations across the board and the other localities will be able to share in the learning the activity provides.

The work will focus on the following key areas identified from the existing engagement and local plan priorities in the North East Copeland area and will see local partners such as Phoenix Youth Project, Home Housing and Cleator Moor Credit Union taking the lead on specific elements:

- Young People
- Employment
- Financial inclusion
- Health
- Housing
- Built and Green Environment

The package of activities will build on existing arrangements to provide a mix of events, participatory actions to encourage active engagement, and discussions along with advice, training and good practice sharing to look at improvements and new ways of engaging and delivering. The first Neighbourhood Forum in the new year for the area will be running a structured discussion around engagement issues and focus on the built and green environment. Connecting Communities will run until March 2010.

## **Locality Working Pilots**

The three pilots have begun: Mid Copeland encompassing the Five Rivers Partnership area, North East Copeland and the North West (Howgate) area. Each area is agreeing a work programme with the locality team for the next six months. It is anticipated that the roll out to other localities will begin in April 2010.

A task and finish steering group of members and officers from a range of stakeholder partners, has worked with the new officer team to develop an inclusive approach, endorsed by CALC, to scope the pilot principles and plan update methodology. A series of joint events to share learning across the borough is being arranged, starting in the New Year. As the pilot process continues and partnership arrangements are firmed up the work to get there will be used to help inform and offer potential partnership arrangement options for the remaining localities. The task and finish group has completed its work and will be replaced by an advisory group drawing on membership from all three tiers of community leaders.

## **CP - Work effectively with others to meet the needs of Copeland – Councillor Elaine Woodburn**

### **Managing Radioactive Waste Safely (MRWS)**

The MRWS Steering group is visiting all the Neighbourhood Forums in West Cumbria to update the communities on the MRWS process. At the forums I have attended the presentation has been welcomed and the community is keen to be kept informed. An informative leaflet has started popping through every letterbox in West Cumbria.

The partnership has recently appointed Mori to carry out independent polls to allow the partnership to measure the effectiveness of its recent communications and informative work. It has also become very apparent that the communication needed for the partnership to ensure the communities are kept informed of what we are doing cannot be done, nor should be done in its entirety by the Local Authorities therefore a communications company has been brought in to lead on this role. The Partnership has also appointed a firm to carry out an independent evaluation of the partnership itself. It is worth reminding members that the cost of the partnership is covered by Government.

## **CP – Helping to reduce our carbon footprint – Councillor Allan Holliday**

### **Copeland Climate Change Planning**

Rachel Osborn our new Sustainability Officer has taken up her post in November. One of her first tasks is to complete the Copeland assessment of action and priorities against the Cumbria Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and work with internal and external partners to develop our three year Copeland specific plan with annual targets and milestones. A series of workshops on the key themes in the Climate Change Strategy are being planned over the next three months and members will be invited to engage through their involvement with existing thematic

working groups and panels. We anticipate bringing the Plan to full council in late spring for support.

## **Improving Quality of Life**

### **CP – Ensure we meet the needs of a diverse community - Councillor Norman Williams**

Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership has provided some funding for two project workers to get all the Cumbrian councils to "Achieving" level of the Ethical Framework for Local Government by Dec 2010.

The project workers are meeting representatives of the Local Authorities and helping them to prepare action plans to get to the required standard.

Working with other Cumbrian councils and the new project team will support us to meet our target and be sure that we are providing services for all our communities.

### **CP - Improve local environmental sustainability - Councillor Geoff Blackwell**

#### **Whitehaven Conservation Area**

On 18 November a public consultation was held on the proposal to extend the boundary of the Whitehaven Conservation Area. This proposal was one of the recommendations of the Conservation Area Management Plan which was also available for scrutiny. There was a steady flow of residents who were interested to know more about planning in conservation areas. On the same day a meeting was also held across a range of organisations to secure greater commitment to the quality of the environment in the town and to create a forum to enable closer working and deliver improved solutions.

### **CP - Improve customer access to council services – Councillor Elaine Woodburn**

#### **Millom Office**

Work has begun on the refurbishment of the Millom office, not only will this project improve the quality of the reception and office area for customers and staff, but will also enable a better integration of the tourism service into the Millom Office with new display areas for tourist information etc.

## **Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs**

Work has commenced on the accommodation of the HMRC within the Copeland Centre, this will be completed before Christmas in readiness for a fully operational shared reception area in the new year.

## **CP - Improve the living environment - Councillor Allan Holliday**

### **APSE Performance Networks**

I am pleased to inform members that the Council's parks team have been selected as one of the 2009 finalists in the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Performance Networks for the Best Performer Award for Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services. A member of the APSE performance networks team will be undertaking a full validation exercise and subject to the validation the results of the Overall Best Performer will be announced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009.

Members may recall that our parks team reached the finals last year and were subsequently assessed as the best performer in the country and overall winner.

## **CP – Improve life chances of children and young people – Councillor Hugh Branney**

### **Young People's Activity - Friday Nights Project.**

The Cultural Services unit is working closely with Connexions and Young Cumbria to provide young people in Whitehaven with access to sports and arts activity on a Friday night. The Council worked with Connexions, as lead agency, on the 'Positive Activity in Whitehaven' project which was delivered during the summer and which demonstrated that by providing young people with activities there would be a reduction in the level of anti-social behaviour reported in the town. On the nights when the project ran there were no reports of young people being involved in anti-social behaviour.

Following this success it was identified that there was a need for on-going activity on Friday nights. Connexions and Youth Cumbria have committed resources to provide staff to open the Harbour Youth Project on Friday evenings in the run up to Christmas as a pilot to enable the partners to identify what activity young people want to get involved in and what level of participation can be expected within the town. The Cultural Services unit is providing basketball sessions, music making and dance activities.

The partners will evaluate these sessions and look for additional resources to roll out the Friday nights project across the borough next year. This evaluation will consider the level of usage within the Harbour Youth building on Friday nights and the quality of the services provided as well as the impact that this activity has had on reports of anti-social behaviour and other indicators such as hospital admissions. The partners would like to be able to provide a changing programme of activity in all of the main towns across the borough and will be using the findings from the pilot to submit

funding applications. The current programme is being funded by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Copeland Borough Council, Connexions and Young Cumbria.

## **Promoting Prosperity**

### **CP - Economic sustainability – Councillor Cath Giel**

#### **Future Jobs Fund**

Council are already aware that the Authority has recently been successful in a bid to the Future Jobs Fund. Using Future Jobs Fund monies Copeland aims is to create 48 'quality' jobs for a 12 month period.

A number of potential Future Jobs Fund vacancies have been identified, such as: Assistant Youth Worker; Recycling Assistant; Conservation Assistant; and Open Spaces Officer. Phoenix Enterprise Centre has been commissioned (using Working Neighborhood Funding) to undertake various aspects of support including a mentoring programme. Lakes College has identified vocational and accredited training that will support clients on the programme.

Copeland has programmed their jobs to commence during the months of January, February and March 2010.

#### **Dilapidated Buildings**

I am pleased to report some success in respect to addressing the dilapidated building issues in the borough. Taylors Tavern, Whitehaven and the Old Toilet Block in Millom are both in the process of being renovated by their respective owners

Neither owners of 84 Main Street, Egremont and 8 Market Place, Whitehaven have complied with the section 215 notices (Town & Country Planning Act 1994 – property adversely affecting the amenity of a neighborhood) and the Council is now beginning legal proceedings to prosecute for non-compliance.

Former Methodist Church, Cleator Moor – compliance period ends 19<sup>th</sup> November, although we understand this property has now been sold.

The Anchor, Frizington – non compliance with section 79 notice ((Building Act 1984 - for property seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood) and the Council is now preparing to demolish the property. The owner has indicated intention to submit a planning application for the renovation of the property and the Council will have to consider this if submitted before demolition works commence.

#### **Growth 2010 + Launch of “Backing Business in Copeland”**

On the 12 November the Council's economic development team exhibited at the first of four countywide Growth 2010 conferences and exhibitions at the Energus Centre, Workington.

The event was organised by Cumbria Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Business Link Northwest, Invest in Cumbria, Online Systems and Sellafield Ltd. Besides promoting the wide range of services offered by the Council, the Economic Development team was able to offer free advice and guidance on starting a business, property availability and funding support. In addition the event provided a useful networking/PR opportunity as a wide range of West Cumbrian businesses showcased their products and services. Alongside the exhibition a series of presentations and speed networking events took place.

Also occurring on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, the Authority launched “Backing Business in Copeland” at The Beacon, Whitehaven. Enabled through LABGI funding and facilitated by West Cumbria Development Agency we can now offer existing local businesses a range of free and confidential support including

- reviews of businesses on the best way forward;
- in-depth advice on issues such as financial management;
- human resources,
- IT and marketing;
- grant aid to assist with equipment,
- marketing and training.

### **Enterprise Whitehaven – Marketing Campaign**

A £15k contribution from LABGI is helping Enterprise Whitehaven to increase trade and spending in Whitehaven Town Centre. So far the campaign has included development of a website [www.ilovewhitehaven.co.uk](http://www.ilovewhitehaven.co.uk). with related posters/stickers for local shopkeepers to display year round in the shops, a festive competition and high profile advertising in Cumbrian Guide booklets and CFM radio.

### **CP Economic sustainability – Councillors Cath Giel / Elaine Woodburn**

#### **Albion Square**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November the emerging design of the Albion Square Office development was presented to the public and Members. The session was well attended throughout the day and it was great to see that the scheme is capturing the imagination of business and residents. A whole range of opinions were expressed and overall the tone of the day was very positive. Where detailed comments were made the architect has begun the process of developing the design with these in mind and it is hoped that the final scheme will be re-presented in the new year.



## **CP - Housing to meet the needs of the future – Councillor George Clements**

### **Landlord Forum**

The second Landlords forum was held in October and was well attended. Landlords received a presentation from the Valuations Office who gave a good explanation of how the Local Housing Allowance was calculated. There was a question and answer session on housing benefits and a discussion on accreditation schemes, the Council anticipates an accreditation scheme will be in place by the end of 2010.

### **Housing Needs Survey**

The Council is commissioning a new housing needs survey for Copeland. This will be completed by June 2010 and replace our 2006 survey and enable the new data to better inform our Local Development Framework Core Strategy. Our strategic housing plan which sets out our core priorities for activity including empty homes, housing market renewal, affordable housing throughout the borough and fuel poverty will be reviewed in the light of this updated understanding of our housing need and supply.

### **Meeting Local Housing Needs**

The Council has statutory obligations to make provision for the needs of gypsies and travelling people in the Borough both as a housing and planning authority.

Copeland is part of a group of Housing and Planning officers from all the Cumbria District Authorities that has been established to coordinate a bid for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency for Innovation Funding to assist us to meet our duty to the Gypsy and Traveller community under the 2004 Housing Act. The Funding would be used to create a Cumbria pot of money for the future provision of residential pitches where need for these arises. Information on the level and location of need for pitches throughout Cumbria was estimated through the 2008 Cumbria Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and will be improved upon through consultation with the local Gypsy and Traveller community. A joint officers' report will be made to the Strategic Housing Panel on the matter early in the new year.

### **Homelessness Action**

The Council is delivering on its Homelessness Plan agreed earlier in 2009. Our priorities continue to be action to prevent homelessness and the team are negotiating with DCLG regarding providing more temporary accommodation opportunities to alleviate the call on emergency bed and breakfast services. In the period July to September 2009, the team dealt with 22 emergency homeless placements, the same number as dealt with through the full year 2008/9.

### **Sanctuary Scheme**

Copeland Borough Council offers a Sanctuary Scheme for anyone who wishes to stay in their home following a domestic incident. We liaise with the Police and Fire Service Community Safety Officers and can provide a 'handyman' service for additional works on the property that are required, such as extra window locks, security lights and door chains.

We have a written procedure for this type of request.

### **CP- Promote healthier lifestyles- Councillor Elaine Woodburn**

#### **West Cumberland Hospital Development**

The Outline Business Case for the project was approved by the North West Strategic Health Authority on 4 November 2009. The initial £6.8 million commitment for the current financial year (2009/10) for early demolition and enabling works is fully planned and is now being spent. Design development is continuing which includes a number of external reviews to ensure achievement of good practice and high quality design.

A planning application has been submitted for use of land adjacent to the hospital at Sneckyeat Industrial Estate as a contractor's compound for the duration of the project.

The Council has been shortlisted to carry out the Building Control function for Laing O'Rourke the selected Procure 21 partner (contractor). Council officers are continuing to assist the hospital project team.

### **CP – Economic Sustainability – Councillor Elaine Woodburn**

#### **Nuclear New Build**

Recently the government has announced the good news that Copeland has reached the next stage in being considered for investment in new nuclear power generators. Under the new planning system national policy on infrastructure will be set out in a series of National Policy Statements. These will establish the national need for a particular type of major infrastructure, together with a series of criteria relating to the benefits and impacts of a development, which the Infrastructure Planning Commission will consider when making a decision on an NSIP (nationally significant infrastructure project) application.

There will be 12 National Policy Statements. The first 7 draft National Policy Statements were published for public consultation in November 2009, these are:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy
- Renewable Energy Generation – including wind farms, energy from waste and biomass plants
- Fossil Fuel Electricity Generating Infrastructure –e.g. gas, oil and coal fired power stations)
- Gas Supply Infrastructure and Gas and Oil Pipelines

- Electricity Networks Infrastructure – e.g. power lines and substations
- Nuclear Power Generation and
- Ports

Clearly these documents are of critical importance to the Council in delivering its ambitions for the future. Most important is the Nuclear Power draft policy, which includes all three of the proposed sites in Copeland out of the ten sites identified national. Copeland will have a very strong role in the process going forward. Initially this will mean preparing a response to the consultation process which is open until 22<sup>nd</sup> February. We will then be working with the developer to deal with site based issues and identifying and managing the impacts of such developments. There is a major issue regarding the resources available to Local Authorities to deal with this process, especially here in Copeland where we have not only three nuclear power stations proposals but also a host of other nuclear issues to respond to. We are continually lobbying government on resolving the resources issues so that; the developments proposed can be fully considered, successful applications delivered in a manner that is locally appropriate and the process is a smooth and successful one that delivers the objectives of the Energy Coast Masterplan.

We are immediately aiming to supplement our resources to start project managing the activities that will be needed.

**All members are invited to a nuclear new build presentation and consultation event on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2.30 to 4.30 in the Bainbridge Room Your input at this event will aid Copeland in writing its response to the consultation. We are also alongside CCC arranging meetings in the areas nominated as well as other locations. Details on these will be provided when confirmed.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE TO COUNCIL**

### **Treasury Management Strategy 2000/10**

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is considered annually. The Treasury Management Strategy 2009/10 was agreed by Council at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009. The annual performance report of Treasury Management (2008/09) was reported to Executive at its August meeting, in accordance with the Prudential Code (Local Government Act 2003) and Council Financial Regulations. In addition, the report also provided an update on current year activity.

Executive accepted the report and noted the current difficulties in relation to treasury management activity, in the light of the Icelandic Banking crisis (September 2008) the decrease in Bank of England base rates, and the reluctance of some institutions to accept deposits of what they view to be low value (i.e. less than £10 million) for short periods.

The Head of Finance and MIS sought Executive's approval to ask Council to update the Treasury Management Strategy to extend the maximum lending limit from £3 Million to £5 Million, for specific institutions (appropriately rated), reflecting the

emerging situation of constriction in the money market (both in terms of institutions and lending rates offered) and the limited options available to the Council.

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is determined by the Council, in accordance with the Prudential Code. Lending and borrowing limits are set by each Council individually, and regular (at least annual) review ensures the Strategy is appropriate both to reflect the Council's requirements and in relation to prevailing economic circumstances.

Council may find the following excerpt from Section 4 of the Executive report ('Treasury Management and Investment Strategies 2009/10') useful background, and it is as follows:-

- 4.2 *The economic outlook remains uncertain. The 2009/10 Treasury Management Strategy, approved by Council on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009, set out wide criteria for available counter-parties which could be used under normal market conditions.*
- 4.3 *In response to the exceptional market conditions, the Strategy also set out temporary restrictions on further investment activity, restricting activity to those counterparties considered of higher credit quality than the minimum criteria set out for approval and limiting the time period for investments. Currently this involves the use of AAA rated Money Market Funds, UK Building Societies with credit ratings (and this does not include local Building Societies; Cumberland and Furness), UK banks with higher credit ratings than those outlined in the investment strategy or which are provided support from the Government.*
- 4.4 *It is proving increasingly difficult to achieve competitive interest rates in the restricted market. Currently the rated Building Societies are giving better returns than the available Banks but there are only three of these Building Societies, active in the market, with whom we do not already have the maximum investment and only one of these with whom we have less than £2.5Million.*
- 4.5 *The highly rated and supported Banks are offering relatively low interest rates because they know that lenders are being ultra cautious in their choice of counter-parties and they are confident of obtaining their required level of borrowing.*
- 4.6 *Executive is asked to consider recommending to Council increasing the lending maximum to £5 Million for those currently approved institutions (para 4.3) and this to be used at the discretion of the Head of Finance and reported to the next Executive meeting. This would provide more flexibility to place deposits, yet limit the exposure to risk which you would increase if you lent to lower or non-rated institutions. This request reflects our experience so far – for a short period of time during the first quarter of 2009/10 the maximum*

*investment limit of £3Million was breached. This contravention of the criteria was a direct result of the difficulties of identifying institutions of sufficiently high credit quality, with whom the Council had investments of less than £3Million and who were willing to take investments at the level offered by the Council.*

- 4.7 *The situation regarding borrowing remains unchanged from that reported to the February Council and the Council will continue to take a cautious approach. In the event that borrowing is necessary, the Head of Finance and MIS, under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending on the prevailing interest rates at the time and taking into account contemporaneous forecasts. Executive agreement would be sought.*

It is important to remind the Council that the Council's investment strategy principal concern is to safeguard the re-payment of the principal and interest of its investments on time, whilst the investment return is a secondary objective, and this is the guiding principle underpinning the Treasury Management Function

Council will also remember that a report was presented to the Audit Committee at its meeting in September, which summarised the Audit Commissions' national report ('Risk and Return') into Treasury Management across the public sector and the Council's Treasury Management activity. The Treasury Management function will be reviewed by internal audit as part of its key financial systems audit programme during the year and the findings will be reported to the Audit Committee.

**Council is recommended to formally agree the revision to the Treasury Management Strategy which will extend the maximum lending limit from £3 Million to £5 Million, for specific institutions to reflect the limited options currently available.**