

Executive Report to Full Council – 23 April 2015

Leader – Councillor Elaine Woodburn

As this is the last Full Council of this four year term I wanted to take the opportunity to thank the majority of members for their hard work, commitment and strength to take the difficult decisions that have needed to be taken over these past four years. I also want to thank the Councils hard working employees who have had to work with reduced budgets, with unfair criticism. Some external criticisers don't seem to want to recognise that when they criticise the Council the employees feel that too. If they actually took the time to understand how the Council works at least their comments would be made from a more educated position. There is no doubt that these past years have been the most difficult in the time I have been a Councillor but the Councils ability to put politics aside, work together and face challenges is commendable. There are many Councillors not seeking re-election and to those I thank for their contribution and wish them well in whatever they chose to do, though with the majority I imagine that will simply be relaxing and enjoying more family time. I wish the Council good luck for the future, there will still be difficult decisions to be made and working in a new way will just be one of the challenges but if the ethos remains as Community First then you can't go far wrong.

Copeland Community Fund

In the year 2014-15 (prior to March Board meeting) 21 grants have been approved to a value of £1,764,580. This included an in-principle decision to support the flood alleviation project in Egremont with a grant of £600,000.

Other large grant decisions were to support: Phoenix Enterprise Centre- Connecting Copeland's Digitally Excluded; Copeland Borough Council – Beacon Museum Development; Calderwood House – homeless hostel in Egremont; Kie Park stake and BMX park in Whitehaven; The Ennerdale Centre.

Small grant decisions were to support: A loan to North and West Cumbria Flag - Local seafood and coastal activities supply chain development; Copeland CAB – Volunteer support team; Whitehaven locality Partnership – Whitehaven Lengthsman scheme; Regen NE Copeland – Community Lengthsman Initiative; Herdwick Sheep Breeders Association – Western Lake District Shows marquees; Santon Bridge Village Hall – Hall Rejuvenation; Friends of Gosforth School – Get Inspired Gosforth; Inspira – Copeland Wheels to Work; Frizington White Start Football Club – Clubhouse Refurbishment; Inspira – Raising Aspirations (World of Work); Shackle Off – Staffing costs; Home to Work – Skills 4 You.

The Fund has also agreed a number of improvements to the application process and reporting and monitoring of projects. These will be in place from April 2015 onwards.

Working Differently – Accommodation Strategy

The Members and Corporate Leadership Team Combined Accommodation Steering Group has been meeting once a fortnight to govern the overall Accommodation Strategy on behalf of the Council.

Civic Hall – We are concluding negotiations on the use of the Dunboyne Hall and the first floor office space. We have asked two groups who are interested in managing the space in the Solway Hall for recreational and entertainment activities to submit business cases to the Council by 31 March 2015. These will be evaluated at the beginning of April to assess whether they are feasible, given the need to cover our costs and generate rental income.

Market Hall – Whitehaven Community Trust (WCT) will vacate the building in July. An application for Listed Building Consent has been made and is in the consultation phase. The aim is to submit the outcome of the consultation to Planning Panel on 29 April 2015.

Copeland Centre – Home Group has indicated that they will be moving out to another location in the town centre by the end of August 2015. Negotiations are underway with prospective tenants to join us on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors. To accommodate the changes created by the vacation dates of WCT and Home Group and to maximise our potential for making the savings target for 2015/16, we have put in place some temporary moves of some of our teams that will come into place from the end of April: Revenues and Benefits will relocate to the second floor, which necessitates moves for ICT, Finance, Planning and Copeland Community Fund for up to 6 months. This will allow construction works to start on the ground floor.

Future Delivery of Our Services

During February, a series of Staff, Member and Trades Unions Briefings were carried out and further discussions were held with all staff and the Trades Unions during March.

The Service Review process and timetable have both been amended to reflect feedback from managers and staff. Service Reviews will be given 6 to 8 weeks for completion to allow enough time for all staff in each particular service to be engaged on the review and to allow time for staff suggestions to come forward and be considered. We aim to have reviews all concluded by the end of June 2015.

We have briefed staff on the different options for the future delivery of services including staying in house, sharing services, trading services to generate income and outsourcing. Whichever routes are taken, the financial position of the Council means we need to make over £3million of savings and that will need to come from reviewing our services.

The Meet the Market Day held on 9 March 2015 saw 17 organisations represented and a separate note of this will be circulated to all staff and members.

We intend to hold another event and invite other public sector organisations and the voluntary and community sector to see if we can work together on some of our services.

The key message is that no decision about how services are to be delivered has been made and there is a due process to go through to get to that decision. We need to await the outcome of the Service Reviews.

Nuclear Issues

Nugen have recently consulted ourselves on their statement of community consultation which was sent out to all Councillors for comments. Only one response was received and their comments were taken on board and included within the response made which was signed off by the Executive on the 24th March.

Nuclear Skills College

A new multi-million pound National College for Nuclear will be built in Workington adjacent to Lakes College. The Government announced that Lillyhall had been chosen as the site for the college, which will train people in apprenticeships and qualifications for the nuclear industry. The new skills college will train students for a future career at Sellafield and the new Moorside plant and could potentially create thousands of jobs for the site. Led by Sellafield and EDF Energy and supported by Lakes College, the facilities will include a reactor simulator and engineering facilities and is another asset that firmly establishes West Cumbria as the Centre of Nuclear Excellence.

Japanese Embassy Visit

We recently hosted a meeting with the Japanese Embassy party which included the Economic Minister. We took the opportunity to give them a brief history of Copeland and cemented our historic nuclear link as well as setting out our support for Toshiba's involvement with the Nugen New Build project. The Minister was very complimentary and wrote stating he looked forward to closer working with Japan and Copeland in the future.

Nuclear Policy Workshops

Members have recently been attending workshops to discuss a Council position statement on many areas within the nuclear arena, including management of waste, storage, disposal, new build and plutonium reuse. It is important that the Council formulates a position on these many strategic areas, they might easily change over time but as we sit here today they are right for right now and allow our officers to continue their work with the industry with a clear steer from members.

West Cumberland Hospital – Maternity Services

Members benefited from a recent update from the Hospital Trust and Clinical Commissioning Group where the main topic of conversation was the recently released report on Maternity services. The report's preferred option was to have a consultant led maternity unit at all four hospitals, Whitehaven, Carlisle, Furness General and Lancaster, though recognised this would need a lot of joint working to secure this. The report stated that representatives from the organisations need to come together in a steering group and to spend the next 12 months in a final attempt to make this option deliverable. All representatives at the meeting stated their commitment to the recommendation and it was agreed that regular updates on the progress was necessary.

Cumbria Leaders Board

I recently attended the second arranged leaders meeting where unitary authorities/combined authorities was the topic of discussion. After the first workshop meeting supported by the LGA it was agreed that all Leaders would go back to their respective authorities and seek their interest in

progressing the options. Full Council has already previously agreed to give myself the mandate to be proactive in these discussions. On attending the next meeting, again with LGA in support no other authority was keen to progress either the Unitary or combined Authority options, though there was a consensus that Cumbria in comparison with other areas was not on the starting block, in one Leaders words, stated just before they announced they did not want to consider any form of united working 'We were just about in the changing room'. Being able to benefit from any devolved powers will prove difficult if there is no real consensus about working together but I'm sure the discussions will continue until financially a decision will have to be taken, who knows what positions individual authorities will be in by that time though.

Finance and HR Portfolio – Councillor Gillian Troughton

ICT Strategy

We are currently developing our new ICT Strategy for 2015 – 2018.

An ICT Steering Group was established and a Members' ICT Group is to meet in early April. Both groups are looking at what is needed to help with the agile working agenda and linking closely to the new Customer Services Strategy which is also being developed.

To ensure we are developing the ICT Strategy appropriately, Internal Audit were asked to look at the process and governance we had put in place. The Internal Audit report has concluded that there is Substantial Assurance in the governance arrangements. The full report will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 14 April 2015.

Community Regeneration – Councillor Hugh Branney

The Council has in the past quarter rolled out a level 1 safeguarding children training module to all staff. This follows on from the adoption of a Safeguarding policy in Autumn 2014. This will be followed by safeguarding vulnerable adults training in 2015/16. Safeguarding level 1 training will be included in the members training programme in 2015/16.

Transition and Performance Portfolio – Councillor Allan Holliday

Equalities Scheme

The Council Equalities Scheme has been reviewed and refreshed and agreed by the March 2015 Executive. All staff have in the past year undertaken equalities training in line with our commitments to integrating our approach to equality throughout the Council.

Environment Portfolio – Councillor Peter Kane

Stray Dogs

Copeland BC have secured a three year deal with a local kennels to accept and manage the stray dogs collected from throughout the borough, this is a statutory function. The contract award has been secured on a fixed price basis and provides the council with a secure three year term with a reliable local service provider who through their national links to various re-homing charities have a

good reputation in regards to their ability of re-homing dogs with very few animals being put to sleep.

Commercial waste

Through their hard work the commercial waste team have recently been awarded a large commercial waste contract with a well-established local business. This new contract will see us making multiple collections from a variety of different locations across the borough, this new contract will not only provide a reliable source of income to the council but at the same time plays its part in supporting the local business with the competitive rates we have applied.

Bereavement Services

A new backup generator has just been installed at the Crematorium as the old one which was around 30 years old was no longer efficient enough to run the facility, we have worked closely with the supplier and installation has taken place without any disruption to services at the crematorium. 2014/2015 has seen a significant increase in the number of cremations compared with the previous year, this equates to 13% increase in number of services which has put a significant pressure on resources, regularly needing to work additional hours to meet demand.

At the same time there has been a 10% decrease in the number of interments across our cemeteries. Work has recently been completed to install an additional small access road in part of Whitehaven cemetery which will create approx. 80 additional burial spaces.

Community Planning Portfolio – Councillor Geoff Garrity

At its March meeting, the Executive agreed the strategic housing market assessment (SHMA) 2014 update. This needs to be undertaken every four years by the Council in line with its statutory housing and planning duties. The updated SHMA has evidenced the need to continue with the target of 230 new dwellings each year to support economic growth and evidenced the increased affordability of many of our housing stock in line with the house prices in Copeland being one of the most affordable areas in England. This latter finding results in a reduction to the shortfall of affordable houses needed in the borough - down to 102 per year from 168. New housing build in the borough over the past five years has been 118 annual average so the annual build target of 230 is challenging. This updated evidence base includes the results of a survey of businesses and employees to further understand future housing requirements and aspiration. A particular challenge in Copeland and Cumbria is the expected population change and the ageing population. There is a clear mismatch between the supply of bungalows 13.4% of current stock and the number of residents that would like to be in a bungalow ie 22.6%. This updated SHMA will assist us in targeting our discussions with social and private housing developers.

Housing Options

During 2014-15, homelessness was prevented for 155 households (including families with children). In the same period, 30 households in Copeland were given the main Housing Duty by the Council under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 Part 7 (meaning they are statutory homeless).

At this time, the Housing Options Team are working with 83 households in Copeland on a housing advice and homelessness prevention basis.

The Housing Options Team is now able to use powers made available to it under the Localism Act 2011 to discharge the main housing duty into suitable accommodation in the private rented sector

for statutorily homeless households, on a case by case basis. The Policy on Private Rented Sector Offer to Statutorily Homeless Households was agreed by Executive on 24 March 2015. This followed presentation of the proposal at Strategic Housing Panel on 10 March 2015.