

**COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Present: Councillors Peter Tyson (Mayor); David Banks; Hugh Branney; Yvonne Clarkson; Peter Connolly; Karl Connor; Jon Downie; Eileen Eastwood; Geoffrey Garrity; Phil Greateorex; Stephen Haraldsen; Ian Hill; Keith Hitchen; Lena Hogg; Allan Holliday; Joan Hully; Alan Jacob; John Kane; Peter Kane; Michael McVeigh; Alistair Norwood; Jack Park; Sam Pollen; David Riley; Dave Smith; William Southward; Graham Sunderland; Gillian Troughton; Jeanette Williams; Carole Woodman; Felicity Wilson; Elaine Woodburn; Henry Wormstrup

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geoffrey Blackwell; John Bowman; Jackie Bowman; George Clements; Brian Dixon; Margarita Docherty; Anne Faichney; John Fallows; Fred Gleaves; Reg Heathcote; John Jackson; David Moore; Robert Salkeld; Peter Stephenson; Gilbert Scurrah; Paul Whalley; Norman Williams; Doug Wilson

**Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 6 September were signed by the Mayor as a correct.

**C 49    Declarations of Interests**

Councillors David Banks; Karl Connor; Jon Downie; Phil Greateorex; Alistair Norwood; David Riley; Sam Pollen and Gillian Troughton declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items 5&6 due to either themselves or their Spouse being employed in the nuclear industry.

Councillor Peter Kane declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items 5&6 due to being employed Sellafied and being involved in the MRWS on trade Union side.

Councillor William Southward declared a non Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items 5&6 due to having family employed in the nuclear industry.

Councillor Joan Hully declared a non Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items 5&6 due to being in receipt of an income from the nuclear industry.

**C 50    Questions from Members of the Public**

**Ms Jane Roper (not present at the meeting) asked the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

“My question is on behalf of future generations:  
How could you even think of leaving us with such a legacy...  
or is it all simply being done so that Nuclear New Build can be given the green light ?  
Either way, where is the truth?”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows:-**

“For over 60 years Copeland has been home to the nuclear industry, and over that time 70 % of this country’s nuclear waste has found its way to Sellafield. Past generations have left it alone and it has only been with the introduction of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority in 2005 that managing the waste has quite rightly been at the forefront of the Governments mind.

The Government issued its white paper in 2008 and that launched the managing Radioactive Waste Management Process of which Copeland alongside Allerdale and Cumbria County Council expressed an interest in 2009, and for three years we have worked within this partnership which culminated in the final report produced this year of which all Member have.

The report does not make any formal recommendations and is guidance for the 3 Councils as decision making bodies to help in their decision making. The issue of nuclear new build was not thought of when the MRWS process started.

This Council agreed to express an interest because of its nuclear history and in the main because of the amount of waste we have located here and I’ve said on numerous occasions whether it stays or goes the impact on this community environmentally, economically and socially is significant and we needed to be part of the discussions”.

**Ms Kathryn Ostell (not present at the meeting) asked the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

“I wish to ask Copeland Borough Council a question as follows: -

I moved to Cumbria from Manchester to improve the quality of my life. I bought a house and invested in peace, tranquillity and fresh air. What reassurance can you give regarding the protection of the natural beauty that is Cumbria? I feel let down by our elected representatives”.

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows:-**

“Within the MRWS Partnership the three local councils along with the other 14 organisations have been working hard for the last 3 years to protect the interest of local communities. Along with colleagues on this Council I live here and work here on a daily basis. I am also concerned about the long term environmental and safety issues for local communities presented by the existence of the waste stored at Sellafield. “

**Mr Gareth Harrison asked the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

“I speak as someone who has been a self-employed artist and photographer in the region for over ten years. I also help out at a local gallery and tourist information centre. I was born and brought up in the area and worked at Sellafield for several years. Therefore I feel that I am to some degree qualified to form my own personal opinion on the nuclear repository question. I spend time in our landscape, I walk our hills, I paint our landscape. I and many others have a view of our area that extends beyond the nuclear sphere. I ask our Councillors to consider the bigger picture also - West Cumbria is a unique and beautiful area that does not need or deserve

or need the proposed repository. Please do not assume that we all want this process to be imposed upon us.”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replies as follows: -**

“I agree that the wider picture needs to be considered and looked at and I think that the Partnerships work has indeed done this. That is also why the Partnership made such an effort over three years to carry out a unique public consultation and engagement and carried out a lot more work than any other process I have been involved with in fact I think it’s a unique process in this country and they always made sure that we heard the views positive and negative they were all listened to and always had the community at the heart of the process.”

**Mr Gareth Harrison asked the following supplementary question: -**

“Just to say that the outcome of the whole process is likely to be a political decision to try and put the repository here because no one else in the Country will want it near them thank you”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows: -**

“Again thank you for those comments that will be taken on board and fed into the decision making meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> October.”

**Mr John Haywood (not present at the meeting) asked the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues**

“My question to the Council is:

What specific community benefits in terms of resources, or financial, have been offered to Cumbria by the Government?”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows: -**

“No specific community benefits have been offered to Cumbria by Government. It would be inappropriate to do so at this stage. The Partnership has agreed 13 principles of a Community Benefits package as described in section 12 of the Final Report and I will highlight three of them that I think are relevant to the question. They cover matters such as: -

- Scale – which says that the scale of any benefits must have the potential to transform the economic and social well-being of West Cumbria
- Distribution – which says that benefit distribution must be equitable, in terms of the scale of the impact on different stakeholders, both locally and nationally. It is anticipated for example that a proportion of the benefits would be ring-fenced for the relevant host-communities’ use, whilst other benefits would reach more widely.

- Community Confidence – In order to establish and maintain community confidence, any agreement on a community benefits package must provide a guarantee that any agreed benefits will be delivered if a site is developed”.

**Mr David Wood asked the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

“I am requesting that Copeland Borough Council considers the financial risks involved in entering into the next stages of the MRWS process. The prospect of finding suitable geology varies depending upon whose assessment one reads. The most optimistic assessment is taken from Dr. Dearlove, who states that the prospect of finding suitable geology in West Cumbria is not particularly promising. At a time when Government cut backs are affecting essential services, it is inconceivable that elected representatives would consider investing potentially billions of pounds of public money in a project whose success is at best not particularly promising.

An alternative approach, as suggested by Councillor Clarkson and others, is for Central Government to invest in a sub-surface facility at Sellafield. Such a facility would provide safer interim storage of nuclear waste for a period of about 100 years. Thus allowing time for a more comprehensive search to be made for a GDF within the UK, in a location where the geology is best suited for such a facility.

Given that a more acceptable and safe alternative is available for this Council to consider, will Copeland Borough Council accept this alternative as the preferred way forward? If not, will Copeland Borough Council explain to the people of West Cumbria, why they disregarded this alternative and prefer to risk wasting huge sums of tax payers money on a less than promising venture”?

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replies as follows:-**

“Again thank you for your question. The alternative as you and other deem as safer and more secure has not been proven for the safe storage of higher activity waste and the premise of a whole MRWS process which was actually based on many years work by CoRWM, who are the recognised group of experts who made the recommendation for a GDF to Government of which Governments of all political persuasions have accepted as the way forward.

On the issue of financial risks it really is for the Government in the shape of DECC to decide whether national taxpayers money is well spent searching in West Cumbria for a site. It is for us to decide whether we want to be part of that search or not.”

**Mr David Wood asked the following supplementary question: -**

“ Yes I think the answer doesn’t actually address the points of my question the safer alternative is safer than the current arrangements not safer than the deep geological repository and as far as the issue of risk is concerned to say that it is the responsibility of Central Government when elected representatives here can decide if that money can be spent or not we have a duty to look after public money and just because someone else is holding the purse strings doesn’t mean that we can spend that money or allow that money to be spent willy nilly.”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows: -**

“Thank you I’ll just reiterate that I did say it’s actually up to this Council to decide if we want to be part of the search or not and again I’ll take just on board your comments with regard to sub surface”

**Mr Joe Murdock asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues**

“We are asking for a search for a GDF site, that’s all. So how can anyone say that they know what a search will find. Surely if the geology is not suitable, then the Search will discover this? There is no logic in the Antis position”.

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows: -**

“In answering your question I agree in that I don’t think there’s anyone who can categorically what a geological study would conclude unless the work does actually take place and I also agree that if the geology is not right for a repository then no repository will be constructed”.

**Mr John Tear asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

“According to the Stewards research, it is clear that the official policy of Cumbria County Council is in support of the principle of Deep Geological Containment. Is Cumbria County Council now doing a complete u-turn on its own principled position? And is so, why? And what importance does Copeland Borough Council give to the views of those people in groups who are not from or don’t live in Copeland.”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows: -**

“Thank you Mr Tear you will appreciate that this is a meeting of Copeland Borough Council and your question would be better targeted at the County Council, however it is worth pointing out that the County Council did sign-up to support the principle of Geological Disposal. On the second part of your question the Partnership did recognise the significance of the issue to the rest of the UK but as Leader of this Borough Council I have always said and will continue to say that the people who are most affected by the proposal should have the loudest voice.”

**Mr Craig Dobson asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

“If Cumbria County Council does do a u-turn, can we take our West Cumbrian future into our OWN HANDS – and our councils, with Copeland in lead, tell Government we will continue with the search process? And have any of the groups opposed to this process, over the three years of its existence ever brought forward and alternative, an alternative, responsible an alternative responsible, costed policy for radioactive waste management”?

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issued replied as follows: -**

“Thank you. I do believe that Copeland should have control over its own destiny but it does have to be always mindful that decisions taken could have an impact that would be felt wider

than the Copeland boundaries. The three decision making bodies of Copeland, Allerdale and the County Council are party to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government and at this current time we will need to work within the confines of that and there has never been for the length of the partnership an alternative responsible and costed policy to manage radioactive waste."

**Mr Edwin Dinsdale asked the following question of the portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

"The MRWS opinion survey – the only real poll that has been done – found that [and I quote] "All across Cumbria, more people were in favour of a GDF site search than were against" Why don't we do the democratic thing, and follow the will of our people in West Cumbria? And do you know why Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth in West Cumbria, and CORE refused to take part in the MRWS process".

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replies as follows: -**

"There were other people in Copeland when they were polled resulted in a 60% of people saying we should take part in the search and this will be equally considered alongside the rest of the Partnership report. On the issue of the Groups you highlight in your question being part of the Partnership I think it would be more appropriate for you to ask them directly. However I can say that the Partnership did invite them on several occasions to be involved in the process and despite them declining such an offer, the Partnership did maintain a channel of communication with them and similar groups".

**Mr Steve Nicholson asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues: -**

"Have any of the groups opposed ever brought forward a coherent economic development strategy for Copeland? Or, frankly, have any of those groups ever shown the slightest interest in the future of Copeland."

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replies as follows: -**

"Thank you for the question. To my knowledge they have not produced an economic strategy for Copeland and in my personal opinion none of the groups have shown any interest in Copeland except the nuclear industry".

**Ms Marianne Birkby asked the following question to the Leader of the Council: -**

"I am a wildlife artist based in the South Lakes. I do commercial work in the Copeland and Allerdale area for various clients whose livelihood depends on the perception of Copeland as a healthy place to work and live. This perception is already undermined by the presence of Sellafield. It squats like a giant toxic toad on what is one of the most beautiful coastlines and the most radioactively polluted in the UK. The reason that artists and poets love the Ennerdale and Eskdale area is because of the wildness and beauty of the land, which is visceral as well as visual. As an artist, how you feel about a place, the spirit of the place, is just as important as the visual scene in front of your eyes. Do Councillors agree that if the door is opened on the 11th October to a nuclear dump under Ennerdale or Eskdale, artists and poets will not be

writing about the natural and wild wonder of this unique place, but will be writing and painting about the grotesque and brutal rape of our land?”

**Councillor Elaine Woodburn, Portfolio Holder for Nuclear Issues replied as follows: -**

“Thank you for your question. Let me start by saying Copeland if it decides to participate is not agreeing to host a repository it is agreeing, if it says yes, to carry out further investigations and further discussions, I also do object to the word dump as this does not rightly describe what a repository would be. But if, and I will keep emphasising it's a big if, this Council does agree to continue discussions the door might be opened but the key to lock it again lies solely with this community. What we sometimes forget, or maybe others who are not local don't seem to know is that nuclear waste is already located here and many including the non-nuclear organisations agree that a long term solution must be found. The difference seems to be is what that solution actually is.

For many years this community has lived under the Nirex cloud and it took brave Governments to place the decision in the hands of those most affected, but whether a repository is right or wrong for Copeland remains to be resolved.

And in due course the Council's Executive will make that decision to proceed or not. And what artists and writers will be producing about Copeland in years to come I could only hazard a guess, like each and every one of us”.

#### **C 51 West Cumbria Managing Radio Active Waste (MRWS) Final Report**

The Chief Executive, Paul Walker introduced MRWS as the subject of debate and emphasised that this was very important for the Council and for the future of Copeland and the rest of West Cumbria.

He went on to outline the format that the rest of the meeting and introduced Rhuari Bennett, the West Cumbria MRWS Independent Programme Manager, gave a 30 minute presentation on the background to MRWS in West Cumbria.

The debate was to give Members the opportunity to express their views on our participation in future stages of MRWS prior to a decision being made by the Executive (as a legal requirement) whether to proceed to stage four or not.

For this reason, the chief Executive recommended that the Mayor ask Council, before the debate starts, to pass a resolution suspending Procedure Rule 15.4(e) requiring a vote at the close of a debate and also in view of the importance of the matter under discussion the Council may wish to pass a resolution suspending Procedure Rule 15.7 to allow Members' to speak more than once in the debate.

Members then received the presentations following which it was moved by the Mayor duly seconded that Procedure Rule 15.4(e) and 15.7 be suspended for the duration of the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That a) Procedure Rule 15.4(e) requiring a vote at the close of a debate be suspended for the duration of the meeting; and

b) Procedure Rule 15.7 to allow Members' to speak more than once in the debate be suspended for the duration of the meeting.

A full debate then took place. Councillors Elaine Woodburn; Karl Connor; Graham Sunderland; Peter Kane; Sam Pollen; Yvonne Clarkson; John Kane; Stephen Haraldsen; Alistair Norwood; Jon Downie; David Riley; Keith Hitchen; Carole Woodman all participated in the debate and Robert Salkeld by way of a statement read by Councillor Alistair Norwood, all contributing Members giving their views on the Council's continuing participation in the MRWS process.

The Leader of the Council Councillor Elaine Woodburn summed up and thanked members for a full and open debate, which would be taken into account when the Executive takes its decision.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm

**Mayor**