

Executive Report to Full Council – 21 March 2013

Strategic Leadership and Nuclear Portfolio – Councillor Elaine Woodburn

Nuclear Issues

Nuclear Waste

Members at the last Full council agreed to continue dialogue with relevant Ministers, government departments and other stakeholders over the long term provisions for the handling and storage of legacy waste and potential new waste streams. The priority work is to make our views known about the MRWS process and what lessons need and can be learnt from our experience both at local and national levels. The intention is to get this to Government early April, and members will have the opportunity to feed in their views.

Sellafield Ltd

Members have been advised previously of the report of the National Audit Office (NAO) into the findings of an assessment to judge the challenges faced in cleaning up Sellafield. The report acknowledged progress but concluded that significant uncertainties and scheduling risks remained, for example, over the considerable uncertainty of the time required and cost of completing facilities to treat and store highly radioactive material held in deteriorating legacy ponds and silos. Further review and a report by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was published in January 2013.

The report was generally critical of the NDA and particularly raised issue over the scale of overall expenditure at Sellafield and the relatively limited social and economic benefit provided to the communities which host the existing facilities.

An appraisal of the report has been reported to the meeting of the Strategic Nuclear and Energy Board on 14 February 2013. The Board were able to note the observations of the PAC and agreed to request the attendance of a senior representative of the NDA at future meeting of the Board to present the Agency's responses to the issues and criticisms raised. Arrangements for such a presentation are in hand and are anticipated to be in place for a Board meeting in May 2013.

Finance and Resources Portfolio – Councillor Gillian Troughton

Bedroom Tax

The introduction of the bedroom tax in April by the Government through DWP means that our Revenues and Benefits service has to implement the changes locally. This is going to affect 1611 households in Copeland with an average loss of housing benefit of £14 pw this means that the residents of Copeland will lose over £1.1M each year.

The council has undertaken some work on mapping where those households are located and therefore where the impacts on our communities will be the most severe. Discussions with CAB to commission an additional £20K of advice and support from them can be tailored to those communities most in need.

There has been a Member Briefing session regarding Welfare Reform and our Customer Services Team; Revenues and Benefits Team; Housing (including the main RSL); Communications Team; and CAB have met to arrange some joined up support for the residents impacted by changes to benefits (starting with the bedroom tax). This work will start in March but we anticipate an on-going need throughout the year. We will be using our Face to Face service centres much more proactively to communicate with customers and raise awareness of the changes occurring and support available. This reflects the principles we have established in the Customer Services Strategy.

Health

The contract for the West Cumberland Hospital new build has been let to Laing O'Rourke. Work is on schedule despite recent poor weather. Laing O'Rourke have advertised for local labour and in addition will be taking on a number of apprentices. Full completion and occupation of the building is due in December 2014. A phase 2 project is under way looking at upgrading the remaining old estate including residences and teaching facilities, as well as the buildings of the hospital itself. A business case will be put to the Strategic Health Authority for funding.

The Cleator Moor Health Centre build is well under way with completion and occupation due by May 2013.

The Local LINK scheme will be replaced by Local Healthwatch from 1st April. This will represent the voice of the patient in holding health services in Cumbria to account. People First have the contract to deliver Local Healthwatch in Cumbria.

Copeland Borough Councillors continue to be active members of both the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee and the New West Cumberland Stakeholder Group. Through both these groups and regular dialogue at member briefings, good working relationships with key personnel within the health economy are being built which are enabling us to challenge and hold to account those responsible for health service delivery. However there is still work to do to engage with the Cumbria Partnership Trust and build the trust now developing between the Council and both the Primary Care Trust/Clinical Commissioning Group and the North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust.

Performance and Transformation Portfolio – Councillor John Bowman

Customer Services

Customer Services are continuing to develop the range of services offered by the contact centre on behalf of service teams. These projects are designed to both improve customer service, help staff change working practices where needed and to help the Council continue to make efficiencies.

Examples of this can be seen in the work carried out with Environmental Health Team. To help the team re-locate to Moresby Depot, the contact centre staff have been trained so that they can answer and resolve a number of common enquiries. This means that the Environmental Health Team can concentrate on more complex enquiries and working face to face with their customers when needed.

This changing pattern of way services are delivered in the future will also include self-service and assisted self-service by customers. This will be made possible through ICT tools and applications and changing the way face to face service areas are designed and managed.

Copeland Partnership

The Fifth Copeland Partnership Forum took place on the 18th January at Cleator Moor Civic Hall. The theme of the Forum was Welfare Reform and Health, with presentations from the Department of Work and Pensions, Dumfries and Galloway Council (LA Universal Credit Pilot), Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK.

The Forum was well attended and well received. One of the outcomes was to organise a partnership meeting to look at the potential impacts of Welfare Reform.

Policy

The Team has supported Executive and Corporate Leadership Team in the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan and associated reports. The Corporate Plan is a key strategic document which sets the direction of the Council and the context in which future decisions and allocation of resources will be taken.

The OSC Chairs have commenced a time limited review on the future of scrutiny and how it can best support the Council going forward. New arrangements will be in place in time for the new civic year.

Sewer/culvert/manhole maps have been created by the GIS Officer for the Egremont area, showing areas of responsibility (e.g. United Utilities, Cumbria County Council Copeland or Environment Agency owned) as we have some responsibility for drainage. The GIS Officer has also sent updated Emergency Planning data to Cumbria County Council.

Housing, Planning and Community Safety Portfolio – Councillor George Clements

Planning

Planning Policy

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD – This document was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination on the 31st October 2012 and the examination process has now formally started. There will be a public hearing 9th -12th April 2013. 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.

West Whitehaven SPD – An Issues and Options paper – approved by the LDF Working Party was the subject of public consultation before Christmas. The results of this consultation exercise are being collated to enable production of the SPD for consideration and then adoption

Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act 2011 established the scope for communities to engage in the process of formulating Neighbourhood Plans, which can become part of the wider planning framework and can influence process and the outcome of planning decisions.

Two Parishes in Copeland, St Bees and Millom Without have started on the initial stages of the process and have secured necessary designation as Neighbourhood Areas.

The Council has a statutory duty to support the process and has endeavoured to provide for clarity for those considering the process in terms of the work which has to be undertaken, the scope of plans and the nature of objectives which may be delivered. It is appropriate to ensure that those with a potential interest do not underestimate possible complexity, overestimate what can be proposed and the need for consistency with the Local Development Framework.

In addition to information already provided in the Council's website a Neighbourhood Planning Protocol has been tabled with the LDF Working Party with a view to the guidance being placed on the website.

Development Management

A range of consultation documents have been issued over the last few months by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The common theme of consultation is a reflection of Government ambitions to ensure that potential for economic growth and development is not inhibited by the planning system. Whilst there may be considerable debate over the accuracy of the assertion that the planning process is the barrier to development that government may perceive, it is relevant to consider suggestions made.

Proposals seek to impose greater sanctions on local planning authorities which fail to handle major planning applications within specific timeframes – a suggested 26 weeks. Consultation presents a concept where planning application fees would be returned to applicants in the event that such major applications are not determined with the timeframe.

Consistent failings would potentially lead to such applications being considered by the Planning Inspectorate rather than the Local Planning Authority.

Further consultation considers the scope for streamlining the planning process – for example removing the need for design and access statements to be submitted with more minor applications, as is currently the case.

The Council has raised issue over some of the proposals and the practicality of their implementation. In particular issues have been raised universally that delay is commonly outside the control of the Council either as a result of the inability of stakeholders or external consultees to provide timely response, or as a result of applicants failing to supply information needed to determine an application. There is no reason why the Planning Service in Copeland, which is generally efficient, effective and high performing should have issue with the proposals being tabled, but the importance of ensuring that processes and systems are robust, appropriately resourced and that performance is accurately monitored and managed becomes all the more important. The relationship with key consultees and the decision making process – the scheme of delegation, the role of the Planning Panel, need to be considered in the context of the suggested approach to development management. Review of pre-application process, appraisal of submissions before the formal application process commences, and the possible wider use of Planning Performance Agreements come to be of increasing significance in enabling the Council to make balanced decisions which secure maximum benefit for the community.

Proposed wind turbines – Weddicar Rigg

An appeal against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission for the above development has been received. Discussion with the Planning Inspectorate over the precise timing of the inquiry into the appeal is on-going, but it is likely that the matter will be considered over the summer – possibly July.

The Council has appointed a barrister, well versed in appeal inquiries relating to wind turbines, who has been able to provide input into the initial stages of preparing for the Council's case to defend the decision to refuse the planning application. Counsel has been able to advise on possible additional expert witnesses who might be able to reflect the views of the Planning Panel, given CBC officer recommendations. Letters notifying those previously engaged in planning process, including all neighbours and those who had objected to the application, of the submission of the appeal have been issued over the during the week ending 1 March 2013.

Housing

Affordable Home Developments

In addition to the 30 new affordable homes for rent to be built in Whitehaven and Bootle in 2013/14, we have recently supported a bid made by the Home Group to the Home and Communities Agency for the provision of 27 bungalows in Whitehaven.

Home Improvement Agency

A Home Improvement Agency (HIA) assists vulnerable homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled or on a low income to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes. HIAs assist people to remain living independently in greater comfort, security, safety and warmth. We are looking at a partnership approach to deliver a comprehensive HIA in Copeland. Officers have met with agencies to discuss how this partnership may look and work. As a result of these discussions, Age UK will be applying for accreditation to provide some core HIA services and will work in partnership with the council and other agencies to assist people to live independently.

Community Safety Partnership

The West Community Safety Partnership has set out its priorities for the coming year 2013/14 against the crime statistics from last year. Circulated separately to members. The areas of most concern for Copeland continue to be repeat domestic violence victimisation rates, offering youth diversionary activities and alcohol related crime including evening and night time violent crime in Whitehaven. We will continue to work in partnership through the Copeland LMAP (Local Multi Agency Problem Solving) monthly group to maintain and aim to continue the current downward trend on anti-social behaviour incidents.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

The Police and Crime Commissioner has written to both the West Cumbria Community Safety Partnership and the Council offering the opportunity to apply for targeted resources in 2013/14. The partnership is developing its request for partnership resources to deliver against the 2013/14 partnership action plan priorities. The Council has made an expression of interest to receive £100,000 matched funding from the PCC against partner and local funding to deliver four key areas of activity as follows:

- Diversionary activities for young people - particularly the Friday Night project and an extension through the PCC match into one further night in line with ASB evidence and hotspots. Project to be delivered via a co-ordinated package of existing youth and community partners offering a range of activities.
- Focus on Whitehaven Town Centre to target both night time economy related anti-social behaviour and daytime shop-lifting behaviour, working closely with the police.
- To commission additional police support and project activity to target our ASB Hotspots: town centres, community identified hotspots working with social landlords and targeted areas and activity picked up through the Copeland LMAP (local multi agency problem solving group) and in partnership with our six localities picking up rural issues and disadvantaged areas within Copeland.
- Working with the Copeland LMAP which focuses on anti-social behaviour issues to identify any key priority issues needing additional resource to target ASB in line with evidenced casework including alcohol related awareness and interventions.

The detailed business case is being prepared for submission in March 2013.

Environment and Sustainability Portfolio – Councillor Allan Holliday

Footway Lighting

Recently Electricity Northwest (ENW) wrote to the Council advising of a change in policy in relation to lighting installations on their distribution network poles. The change means they will not permit the attachment of lighting fixtures to new or replacement poles or where safety clearances between lighting brackets and ENW conductors are not adequate.

The financial impact of this change on the Council could be significant with the disconnection cost of non-compliant lights being in the order of £600 - £800 each, and, should the Council decide to provide new stand-alone columns a further £2,000 - £3,000 each would be required. Clearly this is unsustainable in the Council's new financial situation and the revenue budget position is such that removed lights will not be replaced.

At the present time the detailed impact of ENW's change of policy is being established. Briefly, the Council maintains some 1400 footway lights across the Borough, our asset register indicates of these 1,400 there are 200 are mounted on poles. The majority of the remainder are on free-standing columns unaffected by the changes. It appears the impact will be most felt when ENW conduct a large scale pole replacement programme. For example we have been given 6 months notice of ENW's intention to carry out overhead line work in the Gosforth and Beckermet area which will see 34 lights removed from poles. In this case however a cross reference of our asset list to their notification indicates no CBC installations are affected.

Going forward and recognising there is currently no budget provision for a large scale removal and replacement programme the councils policy on footway lighting will require a reshaping based upon more limited maintenance of existing assets and more widespread community based solutions for new or replacement work.

On-street parking enforcement

Members will recall in December 2011 the Council was asked by Cumbria County Council to provide a price for operating the on-street parking enforcement service in Copeland on its behalf. A business case was put together based on this Council's most recent performance of delivering the service and the price was submitted to the County Council within the short timescales set. At that time the on-street service in Copeland was being managed by Allerdale BC on Cumbria CC's behalf. At the time of pricing the County Council said that TUPE did not apply and this Council's proposal was priced on that basis. The proposal was accepted fairly quickly and discussions began on a formal agreement.

Discussions on the agreement continued throughout 2012 until, during the summer of 2012, the issue of whether TUPE applied was raised again. The definitive position was not resolved until January this year when the County Council confirmed in moving the goalposts that TUPE did now apply and the relevant information was provided in respect of the terms and conditions of employees concerned. As part of due diligence checks performance information for the service for 2012 was also requested. This information was to ensure our

original proposal was reviewed in light of the up to date information. The consequence of this was to highlight that the additional costs of a TUPE transfer (the employees subject to TUPE being paid at a higher grade than this Council's Job Evaluated grades), along with poor performance figures for 2012 means the business case on which our price had been submitted was no longer sustainable. The County Council has been advised that as things stand, this Council is unable to proceed, but that should they reconsider their position in respect of covering the cost implications of the TUPE transfer and performance issues in the service we would be happy to work with them.

Allotments

The Council are currently responsible for five allotment sites across the Borough, being Crow Park, Midgey, Cartgate, Sneakyeat allotments in Whitehaven and Brisco Mount allotments in Egremont. We have been recently reviewing use of all the plots on these sites arising from which 27 plots which were in various stages of neglect have been cleared for use. Of these 5 have already been taken by people on the Council's waiting list and it is anticipated all remaining vacant plots will be reallocated by the end of March.

At the same time the waiting lists for a plot have also been reviewed such that they have been reduced significantly from 160 to 120, a number which will fall further by the re-allocation of the remaining vacant plots.

Clearly one of the best ways of meeting the new savings target on the Allotments budget is to maximise use of the plots. At the same time they are one way in which household expenditure on groceries can be reduced via a more sustainable and healthy route.

Carbon Management Plan

In April 2011 the council set a five year target of reducing carbon emissions by 25%. Alongside this the council allocated a 3 year budget to assist with projects to deliver against this target. With another strong year of delivering against our action plan of projects we are expecting to deliver 6 % in 2012/13 giving a total reduction of 18 % to date.

Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio – Councillor Phil Greatorex

Economic and Community Regeneration

Support for locality partnership plans will be changing from the 1st April 2013. The Council has combined the economic development, youth engagement and locality teams into one new team. There will be three Community Regeneration Officers working on area based economic and community regeneration for three years, each worker linking to two locality partnerships. The existing regeneration projects, partnership and strategy activity will continue with two existing staff remaining. The current Youth Engagement Officer will prioritise youth regeneration activity for a further three years. The match funding to enable this combined team is from Copeland Community Fund from 2013 to 2016. Locality plans will continue to be at the core of the Council's community based regeneration activity

alongside a focus on enabling the Council's corporate priorities for economic growth including our engagement and support of the Economic Blueprint Implementation Plan.

Economic Blueprint Implementation Plan

The Whitehaven Locality Partnership recently held a meeting with key stakeholders from Copeland Borough Council, Britain's Energy Coast, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, Sellafield Ltd and Morgan Sindall to meet with local businesses to discuss the opportunities arising from the development at Albion Square and related regeneration projects. It was a chance for Whitehaven based businesses, particularly those in the Market Place and James Street areas, to hear about the planned development of Albion Square, including timescales and numbers of contractors and eventual employees to be located on the site and to consider how businesses can grow on the back of this and how all partners can work together to increase business activity and inward investment in the area.

The discussion also gave a chance for members to discuss how this will be linked with the THI scheme, the work of the Town Team and emerging coastal projects, as well as see how support from Cumbria County Council in developing a Travel Plan will enable the Town to cope positively with the impact of these schemes.

Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

Our second stage application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is progressing well and will be submitted in May 2013, with the aim of securing £1.36M to help repair and improve our historic buildings and public spaces around Market Place and James Street, with an expected decision in September 2013. The scheme is being led by Copeland Borough Council's Regeneration & Community Team, who are working with the Council's Conservation Officer and the North of England Civic Trust (NECT) to develop the stage 2 bid. We have currently secured all other required match funding against the HLF submission.

The bid aims:

- to bring historic buildings back into appropriate and sustainable use to attract businesses and residents into the town centre increasing the economic vitality of the area.
- reconnect the Old Town to the core of the town centre, strengthening the connection of Albion Square and the harbour with the commercial core and increasing footfall into this marginal area of the town
- improve both quality and availability of town centre business premises
- increase heritage skills levels amongst the local building sector and improve approaches to conservation management and maintenance
- provide a distinctive heritage visitor offer by preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the THI area

In the early stages of development we concentrated on speaking with local businesses and building owners to gauge interest in working with the scheme, with very positive results.

We are now holding a series of public consultation events to raise awareness of the scheme, including:

- A creative event run by Impact and their partners to involve young people and students from Whitehaven School in the Foyer project, through looking at the history of the former YMCA building by talking to local people about their experience of the building alongside discussion of future plans. A book will be created from the event.
- Two drop-in sessions to collate ideas and suggestions for improvements to the public realm, including reinstating historic features that help to connect the THI area with the new developments at Albion Square.
- In addition we are planning a Heritage Skills Fair for the general public and contractors, which will involve training sessions in building and heritage skills as part of creating the skills programme within the scheme.

The THI offers a real 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, particularly with the current development of Albion Square.

Apprenticeship Initiatives in Copeland

We are continuing to prioritise the development of apprenticeship schemes and support to young people in Copeland and as our Council structure changes we are working with partners to deliver the schemes to our communities. The latest scheme to be developed is through funding secured from Copeland Community Fund to Lakes College and will support a further 36 individuals over the next 18 months with their skills development and gaining nationally recognised qualifications. On the existing Copeland Apprenticeship, 16 learners have now completed their framework with nine apprentices remaining in employment with their respective employer.

An evaluation session in December 2012 with some of our current apprentices provided some positive responses towards the delivery of the Copeland Apprenticeship Initiative and apprenticeship opportunities in general.

Copeland Work & Skills Partnership

The Work & Skills Partnership has been able to support a local Meet the Buyer event held for the planned hospital rebuild with Laing O'Rourke and BEC. A follow up meeting was held with Laing O'Rourke attending the recent Partnership meeting to discuss how local business in their supply chain can access partner's services and increase local training and employment through the lifetime of the hospital build programme. The Partnership has also met with DWP for an update on Welfare Reform and proposed changes.

The Work & Skills Partnership Action Plan has recently reported 38 employers engaged in the programme; 42 individuals receiving pre-employment support under the 14-19 employment and skills priority; 264 individuals have been engaged in the programme

through the action plan this quarter bringing the cumulative total to 446; with a further 7 individuals have been supported into employment.

Schools and Employability Programmes

CBC and partners are working with BEC, Sellafield Ltd and their supply chain towards improving links between schools, mentoring and increasing aspirations towards supporting young people into employment and training. The aim is to improve awareness and understanding among young people of local career opportunities and how they are accessed as well as skills needed by the local labour market. We're also working with partners to increase co-ordination and planning around business/ education activity to increase impact.

Leisure Culture and Youth Portfolio – Councillor Hugh Branney

The Beacon

The Beacon has been notified of its successful re-application for Museum Accreditation status. In a letter to the museum, Arts Council England stated that "The panel observed that The Beacon was iconic in the area and praised their ability to plan in uncertain times. The submission was viewed as being very complete and of a high quality". The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for UK museums. To qualify, museums must meet standards on how they are managed, for the services they offer and on how they care for their collection of artifacts.

The Council is seeking external funding to be able to bring a blockbuster exhibition to Copeland for later this year. In the meantime, the current exhibition by In FOCUS photographic club features images of the "Coast of Copeland" and will be on display until 23rd March. After that date, the Beacon is planning a spectacular show drawing from the museum collection. With the working title "Treasures", the aim is to display as many items from the art collection as possible, alongside some of the more curious artifacts which are usually in storage. For once, the aim is not to follow a specific theme, but simply to show as many of the gems in the collection as we are able. It is expected that this show will open on 30th March, 2013.

One of The Beacon's most important annual targets is the number of school pupils which are taught by the team in any one year. Before the end of February, 2013, the Beacon learning team had already achieved their annual target of 4800 pupils. Sessions and resources to support the study of Roman History, World War 2 and the Victorians continue to be popular.

The Beacon team has started its latest project "Gone Fishing" thanks to funding from FLAG (Fisheries Local Action Group) and the Copeland Community Fund. In a recent survey, 142 adults and children were asked to name 5 fish living in the seas off West Cumbria. Only 4% of the children gave a correct answer. Gone Fishing, which is currently in its research phase, aims to put this right and will be launched at the Whitehaven Festival in June, 2013, and will

feature 2 years of activities which will appeal to both adult and children with events such as “Fish & Ships”, an exhibition celebrating Cumbrian fishing and “Something Fishy Going On”, a range of family learning sessions. By the end of March 2015, this ambitious project will have introduced the fishing industry to 2,000 school pupils.

Since 1st January, 2013, The Beacon opening days and hours have changed. The Beacon is now open Wednesday to Saturday 11am to 4pm and Sundays 12 Noon until 4pm.

Sports Development Planning

The Council has been talking to a range of partners including West Lakes College, Active Cumbria and local clubs to maintain a number of sporting initiatives within the borough. It is hoped that the summer programme which has increasingly been delivered by local clubs and providers will continue and be co-ordinated by one of the existing clubs and the Copeland Able and Disabled Sports initiative will be picked up by West Lakes College in line with their partner activity on sports makers. Sports volunteering and activity as a pathway into employment is being investigated by members of the Copeland Skills and Work Partnership.

Young People and Regeneration

The Youth Council and several Youth Forums were able to participate in the recent CBC budget consultations, to ensure that young people’s voices were heard regarding proposed changes. Three years funding has been secured from Copeland Community Fund for the Youth Regeneration post to continue until March 2016. This will enable young people to be more fully integrated into local regeneration frameworks and influence delivery through CBC and its partners.