

Report from Overview and Scrutiny

Lead Members: Councillors B Dixon, Mrs Y R T Clarkson, J Kane, Mrs W Metherell

March and April 2009

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

1. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

(A) Review of Learning and Development

- In 2008/09 a revised employee performance management system had been introduced, linking performance with training and development and this was set out in the Council's Learning and Development Plan.

(B) Terms of Reference of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

- Four potential options for changing the terms of reference of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees, based on the new Cumbria Local Agreement, the Council's priorities (three and four committee options), a single committee with lead scrutiny members for task and finish groups and a alignment with the executive portfolio responsibilities.
- Consultation be carried out with all the Overview and Scrutiny committees and their views to be considered by the Management Committee when making its final recommendation.

(C) Quarterly Compliments, Comments & Complaints and Annual Contact Centre Report

- 19 complaints have been investigated through the Council's Compliments, Comments and Complaints procedure, taking the total number received in the financial year 2008/09 to 93, compared with 121 for the period 2007/08.
- Members considered the role of Enforcement Officers and acknowledged the difficult job they do. It was suggested they be briefed on the positive messages to be put across to the public.
- Members were also keen that litter dropping and dog fouling be targeted in addition to motoring offences.

(D) Work Plans

During consideration of this item, some members expressed a view that they were concerned at the way recent announcements about local developments in the nuclear industry had been made, and that Councillors should have been notified before they were made known through the media.

2. Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(A) Closer to Home

- NHS Cumbria representatives gave an update on the progress on Closer to Home. but felt unable to answer some questions particularly around the proposed setup of the redeveloped West Cumberland hospital.
- These are best directed to the Acute Trust and they have been invited to the next meeting to answer these points.
- Concern was expressed over the news that the Briarwood Nursing Home was going to close and the impact this could have on the resources at West Cumberland Hospital.
- It was confirmed that there was still the same level of ambulance provision. Work was being undertaken to enhance the service in line with the requirements of Closer to Home.
- The NHS Cumbria representatives confirmed that they were not aware of any practise in Copeland who were not on board with Closer to Home.
- Concern was expressed that the speed at which the Closer to Home proposals were being implemented was too quick without the right level of community facilities being put into place first.
- The NHS Cumbria representatives confirmed that members of the public were unable to attend meetings of the locality boards. The Steering Group did have a lay member on it but there were no elected Councillors.
- The Committee considered that a Councillor should be on the board and the Acting Director of Quality of Life advised that the council was intending to undertake an Improvement and Development Agency for local government review of healthy communities in June and this issue would be considered as part of that review.

(B) West Cumbria Health Improvement Plan

- The West Cumbria Health Improvement Plan 2008-2010 sets out the approach by Cumbria NHS for improving health in West Cumbria, with actions to achieve the most important health improvement targets within the period of 2008 -2010.
- The Plan sought to address the key health indicators with West Cumbria.

These include that:

- The demographic projections for the future indicate that numbers of over 65's are set to increase steadily and those in the younger working age groups are set to decline.
- In 2006 Copeland had 7.9%of people of working age claiming incapacity benefits compared to 7.2% for Cumbria and England and Wales.

- Only 1 ward in Copeland is under the national average for binge drinking.
- The rate for teenage pregnancy has risen dramatically to 49.8 per 1,000.
- The highest percentage of obese girls in Cumbria is in Copeland at 22.8%.
- The NHS Cumbria representatives stressed the importance of all the relevant agencies working together on key messages. Similarly investing in the health of our own workforces would help to send out the right positive messages to the private sector.

(C) Concessionary Fares

- An update on the current position of the concessionary fares budget suggested that although people were applying for bus passes they were not being used to any great extent.
- A concessionary travel task and finish group could be set up to look at why the scheme was not being fully utilised, with the statistics for usage being broken down into postcode area.

(D) Terms of Reference

- Option 1 - Committees based on new Local Area Agreement was the Committee's preferred option for the terms of reference of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2009-10.

(E) West Cumberland Hospital Development

- A Task Group of councillors, with representatives from Allerdale, Copeland and the County Council, has been set up by the County Council's Health and Well being committee to scrutinise the new West Cumberland Hospital Development.
- The Task Group has met once and its next meeting on 9 July 2009 will look at the Outline Business Case for the hospital development.
- Following this, the Task Group will be looking at specific aspects of public interest and will welcome views on which topics it should focus on.

(F) Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group

- The Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group continues to meet and will need at least three more meetings before it draws up its recommendations. It is intended that its recommendations will be presented to a future meeting of the Children, Young People and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(A) Regional Strategy Principles and Issues (RS2010)

- The North West Development Agency should be invited to Copeland in order to see the problems of West Cumbria first hand.

- The Committee expressed the view that the infrastructure needs to be continuously improved in West Cumbria including Road and Rail improvements as part of the approach to Nuclear New Build.

(B) Copeland Regeneration Delivery Plan

- The Plan was a working document with the aim of providing a co-ordinated framework with locally agreed priorities to deliver sustainable social, economic and environmental prosperity for Copeland residents as well as support a healthy and diverse local economy.
- The Plan was welcomed subject to seeing targets being set and monitored.

(C) Wind Generated Energy

- This item was deferred until the first meeting of the new municipal year by which time Committee members would be known and a Task and Finish Group could be formed.

4. Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(A) Feedback from Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate

- The Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate visit was informal and the feedback would not be published by the Audit Commission and does not count towards the assessment of the service when Copeland Borough Council is re-inspected in October 2009.
- The feedback indicated that progress had been made in this subject although it should be borne in mind that the full team has only been in place since October 2008.
- The Committee considered empty properties, the use of Consultants, family intervention for Young People and a sanctuary for women subjected to domestic violence.

(B) Whitehaven Multi Storey Car Park

- The Portfolio Holder provided an update that no improvements on been made on the concerns raised by the committee since the last update but the Council continued to work with the Harbour Commissioner on the regeneration of the harbourside area.
- The Committee was disappointed with the lack of progress and the Environmental Health Department was asked to visit the Car Park and comment on any Health and Safety issues.
- The owners of the car park, the Harbour Commissioner and the car park operator APCOA will be invited to the Committee's next meeting.

(C) Crematorium

- A significant amount of work had been undertaken recently including resurfacing the road, resurfacing and remarking the car park, widening the exit road, and the addition of eight car parking bays.
- The area for laying out of flowers had also been resurfaced using a green coloured top surface.
- Within the building area, a new cooler unit had been installed for overnight storage of bodies awaiting cremation, glass was currently being installed in the cloister windows and the cloister garden was being updated.
- With regard to the cremators, Members were advised that these were fifteen years old and nearing the end of their working life.
- The improvements at the Crematorium were welcomed.

(D) Overview and Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

- Option 3 – ‘Committees based on Task And Finish Groups’ was the Committee’s preferred option, with a second preference of Option1 – Committees based on new Local Area Agreement, for the terms of reference of the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2009-10.

(E) Liveability Task and Finish Group

- The Liveability Task and Finish Group continues to meet and will need at least three more meetings before it draws up its recommendations. It is intended that its recommendations will be presented to a future meeting of the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee.