

## **SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD - COMMUNITIES AND PLACE**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board - Communities and Place held on Monday, 25 November 2019 at 10.00 am at Conference Room A and B, Cumbria House, Carlisle

### **PRESENT:**

Mr SB Collins (Chair)

Mr D English  
Mr D Gawne  
Mr KR Hamilton  
Mr A Kennon

Mrs M Rae  
Mrs H Wall  
Mr D Wilson  
Mr CP Turner

### **Also in Attendance:-**

Mr J Beard	-	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mr A Brown	-	Senior Manager - Asset Infrastructure and Transport
Mrs L Davis	-	Democratic Services Officer
Mr S Hall	-	Acting Assistant Director - Economy & Environment
Mr P Greenup	-	Acting Assistant Director for Highways and Transport
Mr S Higgins	-	Assistant Director - Customer and Community Services
Ms C Killeen	-	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor
Mr J Rasbash	-	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

### **PART 1 – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

#### **23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F Cassidy, Mr N Hughes, Mr J Lister and Mr W McEwan.

#### **24 MEMBERSHIP**

Mr P Turner was substituting for Mr J Lister for this meeting only.

#### **25 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest at the meeting.

#### **26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair confirmed that there were no items on the agenda for which the press and public should be excluded.

## **27 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

## **28 EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

Members received a report from the Assistant Director – Customer and Community Services and the Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor providing an update on progress on implementing the three recommendations from the Task and Finish Group on Equality Objectives. All public bodies had a requirement to set four yearly Equality Objectives which were to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations between persons who shared a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor outlined the action taken to date on the Task and Finish Group's three recommendations. A county wide Equality Action plan setting out how the objectives were to be met had been developed and was appended to the report. The Equality Needs Analysis was a data set providing information on services and employment relating to people who shared a protected characteristic and work was underway to complete the 2020 Analysis which would inform the 2020-2024 Equality Objectives and a revised Equality Plan. The suite of local Equality profiles had been produced for local committees and published on the Council's website. Carlisle District's Equality profile was also appended to the report as an example of the information available.

Members discussed the progress of the objectives in the Action Plan. The officer confirmed that eighteen out of the twenty two objectives were on track, with work on the other four being progressed. Members were informed that staff focus groups were in place and could assist in the measurement of the effectiveness of the policies. The VIP appraisal system would also help in the measurement of the effectiveness of the policies.

The SEND figures in the Equality Profile were discussed. The Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor advised members that following the Ofsted inspection a SEND Action Plan and a Task and Finish Group would focus on this issue. The lack of diversity in some schools, tackling childhood obesity, the variance in the SEND figures in each of the districts and issues faced by small rural schools were discussed. Members requested a report on local Equality Objectives be prepared for each local committee.

In discussion of the neurodiversity guidance appended to the report, other hidden disabilities such as colour blindness, hearing loss and prosopagnosia, also known as face blindness were mentioned for inclusion. The difficulties with non-diagnosis was highlighted.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

## **29 RURAL STRATEGY AND LOBBYING - NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Assistant Director - Economy & Environment (the officer) gave a presentation on Lobbying on Rural Matters. Members heard that rural areas were reporting a disproportionate impact of budget cuts and were experiencing worse outcomes in a range of areas such as education, transport and accessing healthcare. This had resulted in calls on Government to produce a strategy to address challenges rural areas faced. The officer explained that the call for a rural strategy had been rejected by Government but Local Industrial Strategies were promoted as the vehicles for rural economic growth.

The officer informed members of two organisations, both of which the county council was a member of, which were acting as voices for rural issues; Rural Services Network (RSN) and Britain's Leading Edge. A summary of the RSN's response to Government in relation to the House of Lord's Select Committee Inquiry on the Rural Economy was included in the report, together with the ambitions of Britain's Leading Edge, a collaboration of 12 upper tier rural authorities. The council was working in collaboration with the Cumbria LEP and the District/Borough Councils to bid for other government funding streams such as Future High Street Funding and Borderlands.

Members discussed issues faced by rural communities such as digital connectivity. The officer agreed to investigate and report direct to the Chair on whether broadband service providers were being lobbied to co-locate on masts for general use. The aspirations for economic growth whilst preserving the area's natural environment, retention of young people to live and work in Cumbria, the housing market, the super ageing population and the county's transport infrastructure were also discussed. The importance of having a strong creative culture for towns was also highlighted.

**RESOLVED**, that the presentation be noted.

## **30 APPROACH TO DEVELOPING AND MANAGING SECTION 38 AND 278 AGREEMENTS**

Members received a presentation from the Senior Manager - Asset Infrastructure and Transport (the officer) on Section 279 and Section 38 Agreements.

The officer informed members that the Council as the Highways Authority had a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to consider and adopt new developments as part of the highways it maintained. Members noted that Section 38 allowed the Council to charge fees to inspect new roads being built which would later be adopted by the Council. Section 278 allowed the Council to charge fees where an existing highway was altered or improved to allow access to a new development.

Members were informed that there was a dedicated resource available for the engagement with developers and progressing legal agreements and fees for S278/S38's. An internal audit had taken place and revised service procedures had been introduced in April 2017. Regular management meetings monitored progress and the agreements were updated/monitored against agreed income targets. Members noted that a new permit system had also been introduced for street works.

Members expressed concerns about planning applications having a major impact on the road network and other community resources such as school places. Problems encountered at Barrow and High Harrington were discussed at the meeting. The Assistant Director - Economy & Environment explained Section 106 agreements could cover significant impacts on the local area but acknowledged the challenges the council faced. The County Council was only a consultee on planning applications, and the final agreement of planning conditions and approval was the responsibility of the District/Borough/National Park planning authority.

The officer confirmed to members that dropped curbs were now included in section agreements as it formed part of the new Cumbria Development Design Guide. He agreed to circulate the link to this document to members and further agreed to check the minimum threshold amount that the council could request for a Section 278 agreement. In discussion of retrospective financial claims from the developer, the bond process was explained. Bonds were held by the council until the work was completed to a satisfactory standard, and if not, the bond would be used to bring the work up to that standard.

Members felt that a Task and Finish Group should be established to review the council's effectiveness of approach to securing planning section agreements and responding to development.

**RESOLVED**, that

- (1) the presentation be noted;
- (2) a scope for a Task and Finish Group be developed for the March meeting of the Board, before being submitted to Scrutiny Management Board for approval.

### **31 RAPID RESPONSE VEHICLES - EVALUATION REPORT**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report on the outcome of the six month pilot of Rapid Response Vehicles (RRV) in Arnside and Staveley.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that as part of the new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2019-23 full Council committed to consideration of replacing large fire engines at Arnside, Staveley and Frizington, and the second fire engine at Maryport, with RRVs that were more suitable to the risk, demand and geography of the county.

Members heard that a pilot scheme had been conducted at Arnside and Staveley between April 2019 and October 2019 and the evaluation report was appended to the report.

In conclusion, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that the pilot had delivered against its objectives, demonstrated increased efficiency and effectiveness in terms of responding to communities where they had been operating. The Fire Service was now developing a plan to rollout RRVs to other stations identified in the IRMP.

The discussion centred around Local Committee engagement before the roll out of further RRVs and winter maintenance and storage of the vehicles. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed to the Chair that the call out figures took into account standby duties at Kendal. It was agreed that, as the evaluation report was a public document, this could be circulated to parish council in preparation of further roll outs. Members were informed that the use of the RRVs had shown nationally to help with staff retention and recruitment and allowed a better work life balance.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

### **32 BOARD BRIEFING**

A report was received by members on the Board's current work programme, together with the current Forward Plan of decisions.

Members were asked to consider the Board's work programme as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report and consider the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 December 2019 – 31 January 2020.

Members discussed future items for the Board's work programme. The member for Millom asked for an item on Haverigg Prison and the community after the prison had been changed from a category C to a category D prison. Racial abuse was also mentioned as a potential issue for further exploration. The Chair requested an item on Cumbria's Highways Asset Management Strategy 2020 - 2025. Members were asked to submit further items for the work programme to the Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

### **33 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board – Communities and Place will be held on Thursday 12 March 2019 at 10 am at County Offices, Kendal.

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm