LOCAL COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND LEADERSHIP

Minutes of a Meeting of the Local Committee Chairs and Leadership held on Wednesday, 22 January 2014 at 10.00 am at County Offices, Kendal

PRESENT:

Mr SF Young (Chair)
Mr J Stephenson (Vice-Chair)  Mrs W Skillicorn
Mr GD Cook  Mrs J Willis
Mr G Humes  Miss HJ Fearon
Mr FI Morgan  Mr M Stephenson
Mr EW Nicholson  Mr J Stephenson (Vice-Chair)

Also in Attendance:-
Diane Wood  -  Chief Executive
Dominic Donnini  -  Corporate Director – Resources
Jim Savege  -  Corporate Director – Environment & Community Services
Andrew Moss  -  Assistant Director – Highways & Transportation
Jim Grisenthwaite  -  Assistant Director – Local Services
Julie Crellin  -  Assistant Director - Finance
Karen Johnson  -  Area Support Manager
David Sheard  -  Area Support Manager
Ted Thwaites  -  Area Support Manager
Nick Evans  -  Senior Manager – Democratic Services

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

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of John Mallinson and Cyril Weber.

22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 October and 4 November were approved as a correct record.

In reviewing the actions agreed at the October meeting the Corporate Director – Environment & Community Services undertook to re-circulate the bus boards process as some members had still to receive it. (Action: JS) In relation to the
circulation of revised structures for local highways teams the Corporate Director would have this actioned so that members had as much information as possible. As the restructure was ongoing with new people joining the teams the most up to date information would be available via the relevant webpages. *(Action: JS)*

23 LOCAL COMMITTEE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS 2014/15

The Leader introduced a report which provided Members with an update on the 2014-15–2016-17 budget and MTFP position and the saving propositions relating to Local Committees. He confirmed that the latest indications suggested that the savings target for the Council as a whole for the next 3 years would increase from the £80m anticipated.

In responding to a question in respect of the budget proposition relating to energy the Assistant Director – Highways & Transportation confirmed that proposals were being developed in respect of dimming and switching off street lights which supported the dark skies agenda these proposals would complement the proposals to switch to more energy efficient lighting.

A number of questions were posed in relation to proposition 29 – on-street parking charges in relation to discretion for local committees, consultation, savings targets etc. The Leader confirmed that the intention was to work with Local Committees so there would be no top down approach as it was important that specific proposals drew upon the large resource of local knowledge which resided in Local Committees. Detailed proposals would be developed in partnership but there would be a requirement to meet overall savings levels providing the budget proposals were agreed by County Council. Consultation on TROs etc would be met centrally so there would be no effect on Local Committee finances. It was acknowledged that effective enforcement would be important and estimates had been made as it how much revenue was expected to be raised through the issue of permits, parking charges and penalty notices. It was agreed that details of numbers of residents permits issued by area would be circulated to Local Committee Chairs/Vice Chairs. *(Action:JS)*

In respect of questions in relation to proposition 15 and the return in house of verge maintenance members were advised that there was sufficient capacity and flexibility within the service to enable provision of an effective service. In house provision would also offer Local Committees the ability to vary the schedule of cuts etc as necessary. In terms of capacity at particularly busy periods additional resources could be called upon via sub contractors as necessary. It was accepted that the year 1 savings target was challenging and would be kept under close review.
The Corporate Director – Environment and Community Services and the Assistant Director – Highways & Transportation briefed members on progress on the restructure of the Highways service. It was expected that the last new appointees would be in post by June 2014. Residual gaps were being covered where necessary on a temporary basis and further mini reviews were underway to confirm need. The new structures were continuing to bed in and the recent poor weather had provided a good test which had evidenced that the deployment of teams locally and speedily had been successful. Further work continued which included the implementation of a new computer system and a member portal which could be used to flag and monitor issues and would provide regular information and detail about calls and issues within divisions. Agreed that an update on numbers recruited/posts vacant/temp/perm by area would be circulated (Action: JS).

In response to questions about where vacancies in Barrow were advertised the Chief Executive confirmed she would report back to members and acknowledged that the general principle that jobs should be advertised locally and in job centres should apply. (Action: DW)

Responding to an enquiry in relation to an incident of a light out which may have contributed to an injury occurring the Assistant Director confirmed in a normal course of events he would expect such a call to be prioritised and undertook to investigate. (Action: AM)

Responding to some criticism of how the new structures and teams were working the Leader advised that during the recent spell of bad weather he had received many calls and emails praising staff and the actions taken during some difficult conditions. He believed this was testament to the re-organisation and such a response had it been available from contractors would have been very costly. The Assistant Director undertook to examine the concerns raised and confirmed that a standards document was nearing completion for circulation to members which would help them in terms of the levels of service they should expect. Overall he felt the service was moving in the right direction but he remained happy to discuss qualitative issues with members. The Corporate Director confirmed that staff were subject to continuous development and that through the appraisal process areas for further development were identified.

Agreed that a presentation to Local Committees be made. (Action: JS)

The Vice Chair of South Lakeland Local Committee referred to the Flooding Scrutiny Report presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2013. The recommendation of Scrutiny Report was that the Making Space for Water Group (MSfWG) should provide Local Committees with regular updates on the management of flood

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incidents in their areas to enable them to consider how they can best support flood prevention, for example by prioritising flooding works within their overall highways programme.

All present were supportive of such an initiative and the Corporate Director undertook to come back with a schedule for presentations to Local Committees (Action:JS)

27 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

28 April 2014 at The Courts, Carlisle at 10am.

The meeting ended at 12.05pm.