

At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Allerdale House on Friday 14 October 2022 at 1.30 pm

Members

Councillor M Heaslip (Co-Chair)

Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes (Co-Chair)

Councillor John Cook

Councillor Malcolm Grainger

Councillor Iain Greaney

Councillor Jimmy Grisdale (Sub)

Councillor Paul Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barbara Cannon, Councillor Allan Daniels and Councillor Daniel Horsley

Staff Present

H Davies, A FitzGerald, N Hardy, J Hewitson, K Kerrigan and G Roach

Also Present

M Fitzgerald (Deputy Leader and Executive Member: Policy, Governance and People Resources)

192. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2022 were signed as a correct record.

193. Declaration of Interests

None declared.

194. Questions

None received.

195. Public Participation

None received.

196. Monitoring of Regeneration Programmes - Workington and Maryport

Kevin Kerrigan, Programme Director for Workington provided a verbal update on the Workington Town Deal projects.

Members were updated on the accelerated funding schemes;
Former opera house site – the site acquisition had been completed in August, a construction contract had been awarded for permanent fencing and site finishing works, due to commence next week for a maximum period of 8 weeks.
Central Way underpass – there were ongoing issues with pigeon faeces, increased by the removal of the damaged netting. They had been working closely with the Cumbria County Council bridges team to identify other possible

solutions as deterrents such like ultra-sonic and audible devices, which had been discounted due to the nature of the structure. The bird netting was seemingly coming out the most appropriate solution and quotes were being obtained.

Updates on the main town deal projects;

Public realm connectivity project – led by Cumbria County Council, work ongoing on stakeholder engagement, an event had been held on 6 October for locally affected businesses, feedback received had been mainly positive about the scheme with some concerns around the potential impact from construction works, long term maintenance and issues around anti-social behaviour. Wider consultation was due to take place from 24 October to 11 November.

Port of Workington and Oldside – monthly project meetings were being held with all concerned to progress the scheme. A topographical survey had now been completed of the Oldside site and were in the process of finalising and ecological walk over survey, required before any future design work.

Digital Accelerator project – led by Lakes College and was progressing well. Professional advisor had been appointed to develop a design plan and identified the IT equipment required. Works on this project were due to be completed by April 2023.

Innovation Centre – now have scope, programme and costs for site survey and design work to get the scheme to RIBA stage 3. Ground penetrating radar survey should take place at the end of the month leading to intrusive ground investigations in mid-November. That would require partial closure of Central carpark so the team were working closely with the Councils Parking Services, residents with parking permits for Central carpark would be provided free access to the towns multi-storey for the duration of the works. An invitation to tender had been drafted for the potential operator of the Centre, it was hoped that the identifying of an operator would coincide with the award of the construction contract to involve the operator in the design phase.

On this scheme further approval was to be required from the Executive prior to the award of construction and the contract for the operator and approval from the Shadow Authority.

Sports Village – the scope of work and budget had now been agreed for the additional project development work required. There had been some positive discussions with the Football Foundation in relation to potential funding for the community pitch. There was also a lot of work around stakeholder engagement. The scheme would require approval from the Executive and Shadow Authority at future stages.

With regards to an update on the Levelling Up Fund Stage 2 process, the funding application for the Workington Gateway project was submitted and it was believed a decision on that was expected by the end of November.

Members asked questions relating to timescales on physical activity for each of the projects, challenge and accountability on designs and plans of projects, expressions of interest on the Investment Zones and potential impact of Local Government Review.

Jeremy Hewitson, Strategic Advisor - Programmes Maryport then provided an update presentation on the regeneration programme for Maryport.

An overview was provided on the Maryport High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) projects including;

Maryport Town Hall – the works were now complete and would be opening its doors imminently as a multi-agency hub to be used by the Regeneration Team, Maryport Town Council and the Police.

1 Senhouse Street, the new Art Gallery – was due to go out to tender imminently for a contractor to progress this project. In the meantime the collection was due to be moved to a temporary home which was to allow storage but also some display until the work was completed.

HAZ Shopfront grants scheme – the first scheme was completed and another was currently on site. Discussions were ongoing with three other shop owners. Originally had intended to deliver 7-10 new shop fronts but costs had increased and funds have had to be reallocated to 1 Senhouse Street.

HAZ Cultural Programme – work and discussions were ongoing.

An overview was provided on the Future High Street Programme;

The Carlton Arts and Entertainment Centre – currently out for tender for a main contractor having received planning permission in July. When those come in with costings it would then need to be looked at whether all original plans could be achieved.

Empire Yard – this project had been amended and simplified since the original plans as an agreement with the multiply owners had not been reached. Future options were being discussed.

Public Realm – the grant funding agreement had been finalised with Cumbria County Council now and legal teams were providing final advice for sign off. A separate scheme was being devised through the Public Realm programme for a ‘beach boardwalk’ approx. 100 meters in length providing a link with the Ebike Hub and connectivity to Hadrian’s Cycleway.

Residential Conversion Grants – the scheme would deliver up to 18 new residential apartments. The first conversion was now on site.

The Wave Leisure Centre – planning permission was to be submitted shortly going out for tender at the same time.

Christchurch the new Maritime Museum location – the tender for a main contractor was due to go out imminently.

The main issues that had been experienced since awarded the funding were around the costs of building materials increasing significantly. It had led to having to go out to market to a wider tender to try and bring costs back down.

Questions were asked around public engagement and communication and contributions to the shopfront scheme.

Councillor I Greaney raised an enquiry in respect of the proposal to redevelop the disused toilet block on Maryport promenade as a new café facility. The Strategic Advisor - Programmes Maryport agreed to find out and update members following the meeting.

Councillor C McCarron-Holmes requested an update on three planning breaches on Senhouse Street, Maryport.

Again it was agreed that an update would be circulated to members following the meeting.

Agreed

That the update presentations be noted.

197. Gypsy and Traveller Site Report

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Governance and People Resources provided an update on progress with the Gypsy and Traveller Site Report.

It was explained that a Needs Assessment was published in 2021, following which the Council had asked for further research to be carried out. The Council was now confident in its understanding of the requirements of the traveller community in the local area.

From the Needs Assessment five encampments had been identified, with an overall message coming through that a single site was not the preferred choice. The community was comprised of a number of smaller communities who did not necessarily want to be accommodated together.

From the additional research carried out this year it was found that of the five groups only three still remained in the Allerdale area, of those, two of the groups were willing to purchase or rent land from the Council and one group only to rent.

The second consultation was undertaken in May this year and it was believed the number of groups in the area may have changed again however that was to be confirmed.

The preferred option coming out of the consultation process was recommending two, perhaps three smaller sites at 'showman's yard' size.

The challenge the Council now faced was there wasn't a lot of land available for that purpose.

Members were also updated from the police perspective on the situation.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) had last month received a report from the Inspector that the Chief Constable had asked for a peer review on the policies and procedures that had been in operation in Allerdale. That had been triggered by the surge of traveller encampments seen during the pandemic and the difficulties and tensions experienced then in both communities.

The peer review had gone well and the policies and procedures used here were to be recommended to be adopted county wide. There had been a couple of recommendations around strategic oversight, mapping and training for all involved agencies. The police were hoping to roll out the processes across the county and had requested support with that from the CSP.

Members raised concerns around sites being made essentially private asking whether that lead to having the same problems in the future. They also asked what the local options were for the sites and location preferences of the groups.

Agreed

That the update be noted.

198. Finance Report for the period April to July 2022

The Committee considered the quarterly finance update report for the period April to July 2022.

Under the Policy, Governance and People Resources Portfolio members discussed the disabled facilities grant scheme commenting that the Council needed to get to grips with the waiting list and urged the Executive to address the resources with some urgency.

Agreed

That the Finance update report for quarter 2 be noted.

199. Cost of Living Measures Update

The Strategic Advisor – Corporate Policy presented a report to members to update on measures being taken to address the cost of living crisis, as requested by the Committee at their previous meeting.

The report summarised the current packages of support and interventions provided by Government to help households, activity that the Council was undertaking and other activity and support available in the Allerdale area.

The Council had developed a new page on its website for signposting and to help make it easier to find advice on cost of living support.

The committee then had a discussion around what further interventions could be made. Members were informed that the Council had some unallocated funding in three budget pots that could be brought together to support schemes or projects over the remainder of 2022/23. Officers were currently exploring options, in consultation with the Executive, to form a package of additional support. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be updated on any agreed arrangements at its next meeting.

Agreed

That the update be noted.

200. Verbal Update on Local Government Reorganisation

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Performance and Economic Strategy) provided members with a verbal update on LGR. The recruitment of the Cumberland Statutory Officers was now complete, Catherine Nicholson, current S151 Officer for Allerdale, was to be S151 Officer and Claire Liddle, current Head of Legal and Democratic for Carlisle, was to be the Monitoring Officer.

Consultation on the Senior Leadership Structure was now open closing on 24 October.

The process of allocating staff to the two new councils and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service had now formally begun. It was the expectation that the majority of staff would know which council they would be working for on 1 April 2023 by the end of November.

Both new councils had now agreed the principle that staff would continue to be able to work flexibly between office locations from 1 April 2023, irrespective of which authority they were employed by. This was to allow freedom of movement and avoid staff having to relocate work base.

The Cumberland Council Plan was due to be considered by Shadow Council on 18 October and the draft Budget for Cumberland was going to Shadow Executive on 27 October.

Members asked questions around projected savings and the new Unitary Authority website

Agreed

That the update be noted.

201. Forward Plan

The forward plan was noted.

202. Work Programme and Outcomes Monitoring

Members noted the work programme and discussed the expected items for the next meeting.

The Chair requested that progress on responses to questions from Committee on the St Michaels Safer Streets Project be included for the next meeting.

203. Task and Finish Group/Working Group Updates

Verbal updates were provided by the respective Chair's on the TFGs;

- Access to Health Services – GPs and Dentistry TFG – good progress was being made and a meeting was scheduled for 24 October with the NHS Commissioners
- Customer Services TFG – a number of meetings had been held with Customer Services senior managers and in due course a number of the group members were due a site visit to observe the team

The meeting closed at 3.13 pm