

At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Allerdale House on Friday 11 November 2022 at 1.30 pm

Members

Councillor Michael Heaslip (co-Chair)

Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes (Co-Chair)

Councillor Barbara Cannon

Councillor John Cook

Councillor Daniel Horsley

Councillor Sally Lansbury

Councillor Paul Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carole Armstrong, Councillor Allan Daniels, Councillor Patrick Gorrill, Councillor Malcolm Grainger and Councillor Iain Greaney

Staff Present

B Carlin, H Davies, A FitzGerald and G Roach

219. Minutes

Councillor Heaslip commented that a number of points raised by members at the previous meeting had not been recorded and asked that they be amended as follows;

Under minute number 196. Monitoring of Regeneration Programmes – Workington & Maryport – in relation to the paragraph on the Sports Village, to include ‘Members raised their concerns around the tight timescale for completion of the project and urged the Executive to ensure it was progressing swiftly’.

Under minute number 197. Gypsy and Traveller Site Report in the last paragraph include ‘Members stressed the importance of having a site to accommodate casual visitors to the area as well as more or less permanent residents’.

Under minute number 200. Verbal Update on Local Government Reorganisation in the last paragraph include ‘where were the predicted savings to come from, in particular if all buildings were to be kept on,...’.

Resolved

The minutes were agreed as a correct record subject to the above amendments.

220. Declaration of Interests

None declared.

221. Questions

None received.

222. Public Participation

None received.

223. Verbal Update on Cost of Living Measures

The Strategic Advisor – Corporate Policy provided the Committee with a verbal update on the cost of living measures being taken by the Council. At the previous meeting members were informed that options were being explored on how a pot of unallocated money could be used to assist residents. A package had now been agreed and the funds were to be divided as follows;

Homelessness - £20k - This funding allocation was to fill the funding gap left by DLUHC confirming that there would be no winter provision grant allocation this year for providing emergency accommodation under the SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency protocol);

Foodbank - £25k - This would fund £10 vouchers for households coming to the Foodbank. Targeted primarily at families picking up out of term time free school meal packs, as well as other families in emergency need. The £10 vouchers could be used at local businesses for fresh produce (fruit and veg, fresh meat etc.);

Warm spots/rooms/hubs through community centres or village halls - £25k - A number of projects were already being developed across different places. The council's contribution may be to top up funds available to support warm spots further into the winter;

Third sector grants - £50k - Grants to support third sector support agencies offering help with issues exacerbated by cost of living pressures e.g. mental health, alcohol and drug services, domestic violence;

Cumbria Community Foundation Winter Warmth Fund - £10k - Donation into the fund that supports vulnerable older people who struggle to heat their homes, so they can stay warm and healthy during winter.

In addition to those

- it was also agreed that some remaining funding in the DLUHC Hardship Fund would go to DHPs so that there was enough funding there to meet what we expect will be increased demand (£146k).

The Housing Team were also developing proposals with Cafs and AgeUK for a winter warmth project for Allerdale residents.

It was agreed that an update would be provided to the Committee on the demand and uptake of the above initiatives.

Agreed

That the update be noted.

224. UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan progress update

The Assistant Chief Executive (Innovation and Commercial) presented the draft Executive report to the Committee and answered any questions.

Questions were asked around the delivery arrangements including timescale and communication strategy.

It was explained that the year one funding would need to be spent, or at the very least committed, by the end of this financial year making the programme timetable quite tight to manage, in particular with all of the administrative process involved with grant applications. Therefore to assist with that a lot of groundwork was being carried out now through identifying which interventions and projects were already in the Councils control that could be expanded upon and using targeted communication campaigns.

Members enquired about the methodology as to establishing the list of agreed funding awards as set out in the report.

It was confirmed the Executive had prioritised the programme cross-referenced against the Council Plan.

The report was due to go to Executive on 23 November 2022 for approval.

Agreed

That the update be noted.

225. Progress on responses to questions on Safer Streets Project

The Committee considered a further response received from the Safer Streets Co-ordinator, from that brought a conclusion to some of their earlier queries on why the focus of the project was around burglaries in particular. It was confirmed that the focus had been specified by the Home Office along with strict guidelines in relation to the funding.

Members still felt that a number of their questions remained unanswered. It was the quantitative information they were interested in, such as the number of burglaries in the area at the start of the Safer Streets project and the figures afterwards. That information could demonstrate the added value from the scheme.

The Chair resolved to engage again with both the Co-ordinator and the Police to try and get the responses to outstanding questions from the Committee.

Agreed

That the update be noted.

226. Verbal Update on Local Government Reorganisation

The Strategic Advisor – Corporate Policy provided members with a verbal update on LGR.

All workplans had been reviewed to ensure they were robust and focused on 'day one readiness', 20% across all plans had been achieved to date.

The Cumberland Council Plan had now been agreed and an initial draft of the Target Operating Model for the new council developed. The operating model

was a detailed description of how the Council would work in the future, with the key aims of putting better outcomes for residents and the delivery of the Council Plan at the centre of all operations.

The budget setting process was well underway and Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committees were being consulted.

Agreed

That the update be noted.

227. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

228. Work Programme and Outcomes Monitoring

Members noted the work programme and discussed the expected items for the next meeting on Friday 9 December 2022.

It was noted that a new item was to be included for this meeting on the Housing Grants and Assistance Policy and the Housing Manager would be in attendance.

The Chair also requested that a further update on responses to the questions on the Safer Streets project be included for this meeting if responses had been received from the Safer Streets Co-ordinator and/the Police in time.

229. Task and Finish Group/Working Group Updates

Verbal updates were provided on the TFGs;

Access to Health Services

The first meeting had taken place with the lead commissioner for Dental services in Allerdale. Councillors heard that Cumbria was the most challenging part of the area that covers Northeast England and North Cumbria. The commissioners had been unsuccessful in replacing the contract capacity in Workington but continue to use all local tools available to the commissioners within the confines of the national framework. This had included paying dentists for fixed sessions, paying above the average for new capacity, working with UCLAN on training and linking this with trying to attract new dentist providers to the area.

The next meeting was due to take place with the Director of Place and Primary Care at the NHS with responsibility for Cumbria on 18 November.

The committee was also seeking to meet with Healthwatch Cumbria and with the North Cumbria Integrated Care Partnership.

Customer Services

The Customer services TFG had met with the Head of Paid Service and discussed the approach of Allerdale to customer services and the problems that had arisen over recent years with tackling the COVID pandemic. The recent mystery shopper survey was shared with the group including how work to

improve as a result of the issues highlighted. Staff turnover was being managed and replacement staff were shortly to start and the team would be back to full strength.

Councillors had visited Customer Services on 8 November to meet front line staff and listen in on calls.

The TFG was due to meet shortly to agree its final report and recommendations to bring to the December Committee meeting.

It was hoped that once the Customer Services TFG had finalised their report work could start on the final TFG on 'Democratic Participation in Voting'.

Democratic Services would circulate a further request to members for anyone wanting to be involved.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm