

SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD - COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board - Communities and Place held on Thursday, 10 March 2022 at 10.00 am at County Offices Kendal

PRESENT:

Mr SB Collins (Chair)

Mr F Cassidy
Mr D English
Mr D Gawne
Mr KR Hamilton

Mr J Lister (Vice-Chair)
Mr AJ Markley
Mr W McEwan
Mr CP Turner

Also in Attendance:-

Mr J Beard	-	Chief Fire Officer
Mr D Coyle	-	Manager of Flood & Development Management
Mrs L Davis	-	Democratic Services Officer
Mr A Harty	-	Assistant Director - Environment and Enterprise
Ms A Hatcher	-	Assistant Director Growth and Infrastructure
Ms A Jones	-	Executive Director - Economy and Infrastructure
Ms C Notman	-	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor
Ms J Richardson	-	Business Manager, Fire and Rescue Service
Ms C Tringham	-	Senior Manager - Environment and Regulatory Services

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

97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr D Wilson.

98 MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that Councillor R Dobson had replaced Councillor C Hogg as a member of the Board.

99 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

100 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items of business that required the exclusion of the press and public.

101 MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2021 be agreed as an accurate record.

102 UPDATE ON STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (CFRS)

Members received a report from the Chief Fire Officer providing an update on strategic issues currently facing the Service.

Members noted that Local Government Reform (LGR) and future governance models were a key area of focus for the Service but also Fire Service Governance. The Chief Fire Officer informed the Board that since early November 2021, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been developing the business case that would potentially allow the PCC to assume governance of the Fire Service. As part of the process the PCC had started a public consultation and had a deadline of 31 March 2022 to submit the business case to the Home Officer for their consideration and decision by the Secretary of State. Members of the Board had put their views forward on this at an informal session held on 18 March.

The Chief Fire Officer then informed members of the Fire Reform White Paper that will outline reform proposals for consultation. Publication of this is awaited but suggested indications of content were listed in the report.

Members were notified that, following an inspection in 2018/19, the Service would go through its second inspection, and at the same time, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary would continue to highlight national issues following a State of Nation Report. It was noted that the outcome of the second inspection and the national issues would drive the Service's work programme over the coming years. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the inspection regime had changed from two weeks to eight weeks, was labour intensive and this, with Local Government Reform and high intensity work streams, was a huge burden of work on the Service.

To conclude, the Chief Fire Officer outlined Public Inquiries, changes in legislation and the work undertaken by the Service, in conjunction with partners, on the response to Storm Arwen.

A lengthy discussion took place around Fire Service governance. A member requested a change to one of the initial observations made at the informal session (paragraph 3.7 - bullet point 5) to read "the economic case presented was not conclusive on which model was more efficient" and this was agreed by Members. Members were not unified on the future model of the service; concerns were expressed that a change may lead to fire station closures and a disconnect from being publicly accountable. A member, supporting the amalgamation highlighted the benefits of the Blue Light Hub. In answer to a member's question, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service's budget would be ring fenced if amalgamated, Fire Service legislation had not changed irrespective of the model and Community Risk Management Plans defined the service and the funding obligation. The Chief

Fire Officer and Business Manager noted members' feedback, which would inform the County Council's response to the business case developed by the PCC.

The Chief Fire Officer outlined expectations from the Government's White Paper and changes in legislation. It was noted that the legislation changes would have a significant impact on the Service both in terms of the cost and employee abstraction to attend newly mandated training. In answer to a member's question on the newly developed and approved rescue boat code, the Chief Fire Officer said that Cumbria, at present, had four rescue boats and the service was looking to improve and implement a more robust and rapid response to this type of intervention.

The discussion led on to resilience and emergency planning, resilience following the storms and emergency planning, in the wake of the current war in Ukraine. The Chair said that Storm Arwen had exposed a number of issues that needed to be proactively addressed and officers had agreed to produce a report on this to a future Board meeting. The Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure acknowledged the risks and advised that the Digital Connect Team were looking at resolutions for the broadband issues experienced in some areas of the county. It was further agreed that officers write to the relevant agencies/ministers to highlight and proactively try resolve these issues before reoccurrence. The Chief Fire Officer, in his role as Chair of the Local Resilience Forum, advised members that the Forum were aware and were looking for resolutions, balancing the need for service involvement and to support community resilience.

To conclude members thanked the service for the work undertaken, and the Chief Fire Officer for his report.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

103 CUMBRIA COASTAL STRATEGY UPDATE

Members received a presentation from the Manager of Flood & Development Management on the Cumbria Coastal Strategy. The officer outlined the background to the Strategy, responsible authorities and the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). Members noted the hierarchy of Strategy and Scheme plans that the Environment Agency and Local Authorities use to plan their work to manage coastal risk. The SMP covered all England's shoreline and the main four policies were outlined in the presentation.

The officer outlined which policy units have coastal defence management needs in the short term for a variety of reasons, named priority units. Members noted the Strategy provided a listing of 406 actions across the policy units covering Cumbria, rated in priority order, with 66 in the high category. Concentration had been given on scheme creation for the 66 priority units and the Lead Flood Authority (the County Council) and the Coastal Protection Authorities (CPAs) had received confirmation that they can look to proceed to investigate capital projects for 16 schemes within the current 6 year Defra funding (2021-27), with another possible 10 schemes with a mixture of funding.

To conclude the officer outlined the coastal programme 2021 – 2027.

A member asked that acronyms not be used in reports for the benefit of members and the public. In answer to a question the officer confirmed that close collaborative working took place with Network Rail on the Cumbrian Coast line and Network Rail formed part of the North West Coastal Group.

The Local Member for Solway Coast and the Local Member for Walney South thanked the team for the work undertaken at Allonby and Walney South respectively.

Discussion centred on dredging at the Port of Workington. The officer confirmed that dredged materials were used for beach replenishment. The Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure explained the Port's dredging requirements and that the Port Manager worked with the Flood and Development Management Team.

The officer was thanked for his presentation.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

104 INDEPENDENT PLANNING REPORT - INTERIM REPORT

Members received an interim report following the paper the Board received in September 2021 on the Independent Planning Review Outcome Report: Energy from Waste Facility, Kingmoor Park, Carlisle and the update paper received in November 2021.

The Senior Manager - Environment and Regulatory Services outlined progress since the last report and the key changes which were listed in the report. The Improvement Plan, appended to the report, outlined a number of other recommendations that had been progressed.

To conclude the officer highlighted the next steps to be taken and confirmed to members that this area of work would continue to be fully considered as part of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme.

A member requested a copy of the route maps and the officer agreed to provide these. The member highlighted the importance of proofreading, training and style of this and member conduct at site visits. The officer outlined the training in place for members and officers. The Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure advised members that full induction and training was being organised for Shadow Authority members.

In answer to a member's question, the officer went through the amber proposed improvements in the Service Improvement Plan. Members were assured all improvements were being addressed. Discussion took place around the Waste and Mineral Plan and the review of this. It was noted that the two new authorities would have a statutory responsibility to have their own Waste and Mineral Plan.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

105 CLEAN AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Members received a report and presentation from the Assistant Director, Growth and Infrastructure on the work to promote clean and inclusive growth within the county. Members noted the work included consideration of national and local strategy drivers, partnership working with Cumbria LEP and identified some of the key opportunities present within Cumbria that the County Council was working on.

The Local Member for Risedale thanked the officer for the informative presentation and raised the age of the second-hand buses in Barrow and tree planting/maintenance. It was recognised that a tree planting policy wasn't in place and the cost of maintenance in some areas was falling to the Local Committee. The Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure recognised this and advised members that the environment lead and highway teams would develop a suitable tree planting policy.

The discussion centred on difficulties experienced by farmers, offshore and on shore wind farms, rural travel, the declining working age population and how people that had moved to the area but worked elsewhere were counted. The officer confirmed that moving to the county but being employed elsewhere was an emerging trend and had both advantages and disadvantages.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

106 BOARD BRIEFING

A report was received by members on the Board's work programme, together with the Council's Forward Plans of key decisions and the update from the informal Board session held with regard to Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service Governance for the future.

Discussion regarding the work programme specifically focussed on the last meeting of the Board to be held in March 2023 and ending well. In addition, the Chair wanted to ensure the smooth transition of scrutiny to the new authorities. It was suggested that the shadow authority scrutiny members should be involved with the Board to enable this transition. The Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor suggested that following the elections for the shadow authorities this could be revisited.

The Assistant Director – Environment & Enterprise advised a member on a key decision that the award of a construction contract – Torpenhow Junction, A595 Bothel had not yet been awarded.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the update from the informal session be noted;
- (2) the Board's current work programme be noted;
- (3) the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for 1 April 2022 – 31 May 2022 be noted;

107 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Board would be held on 10 June 2022 at 10 am at Cumbria House, Carlisle.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm