



## **Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date:** Wednesday, 3 January 2024

**Time:** 10.30 am

**Location:** Conference Room B - Cumbria House

**Present:** Cllr A Markley (Chair), Cllr H Tucker (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Eldon, Cllr J Forster, Cllr L Jones-Bulman and Cllr C Wills

**Also Present:** Councillor L Brown – Governance and Thriving Communities Portfolio Holder

**In Attendance** Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
Regeneration Manager  
Nuclear Advisor  
Stakeholder Relationship Manager, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

### **PLOS.32/23 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Ghayouba and Councillor C McCarron-Holmes.

### **PLOS.33/23 Declaration of Interest**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

### **PLOS.34/23 Exclusion of Press & Public**

RESOLVED – It was agreed that the items in Part A be dealt with in public and the items in private be dealt with when the public and press are excluded.

### **PLOS.35/23 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Regarding minute excerpt PLOS.29/23 Overview of Major Cumberland Place Projects, a Member commented that section covering the closure of the facility at weekends did not make clear that the facility was in Cleator Moor, he requested that the minute be amended. The Democratic Services Officer undertook to do so.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the inclusion of the amendment above, that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2023 be approved.

### **PLOS.36/23 Relationship between the Council and Nuclear Sector in Cumberland**

The Nuclear Issues Advisor submitted a report that considered the evolving relationship between the nuclear sector and local government in Cumberland. The Sellafield site was in a long term decommissioning process at the beginning of which created expectations of decreased employment opportunities, however, the number of jobs at the site was showing an increased employment trend which would rise further as new developments at the site and in the industry came online.

As well as the recent reorganisation of local government in the Cumberland area a new leadership team was in place at Sellafield, both Cumberland Council and Sellafield enjoyed very

good relationship with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The first 'Tier 1' comprising the Leaders and Chief Executives of Cumberland Council and Sellafield had taken place and had focussed on inclusive recruitment and how to maximise the retention of economic benefits in Cumberland.

Discussion arose on the issue of education during which the following observations / questions were raised:

Members spoke of the importance of engaging with those in education at the earliest opportunity; the need for a co-ordinated approach to working with schools / colleges / universities; expanding work with schools more widely through the Cumberland area; and retraining and upskilling adults; training and education to support both the nuclear industry and the supply chain industries associated with it.

The Nuclear Issues Advisor noted that there had been a shift in the focus of recruitment to skills rather than qualifications. The new Chief Executive of Sellafield was proactively supporting the inclusive recruitment.

The Stakeholder Relationship Manager provided a number of examples of existing programmes to engage with education establishments within the Cumberland Council area including: the Well Programme being delivered in west Cumbrian schools and the Young Generation Network, a programme of engagement for sixth forms which gave information on entering the nuclear industry and why it was aspirational to work in the industry.

A Member inquired about the mechanisms in place to retain skilled people in the workforce and sought assurance that those seeking employment at Sellafield would have long employment futures.

The Nuclear Issues Advisor responded that a key focus of the economic strategy was retention. The Council had a role to play in highlighting what was on offer in the area as well as advocating for improved transport connectivity within its area.

There were currently eleven and a half thousand persons employed directly at Sellafield and many others in the supply chain. In the coming years there was both construction and decommissioning work which meant that the level of employment was not likely to change. Going forward it was possible that the overall employee requirement may reduce, but given the decommissioning work, the construction of stores and the development of modular reactors which would require sites to be constructed to house them, the extent of any reductions was not known.

A Member considered there was a need for regional strategic planning to support the education and training needs of the industry.

The Nuclear Issues Advisor responded noting that the adjacent Westmorland and Furness Council also had issues relating to workforce skills requirements in relation to the submarine construction industry in Barrow and that the Chief Executives of both Councils had spoken on the matter.

The Chair thanked the Nuclear Issues Advisor and the Stakeholder Relationship Manager for the report and their responses to the Committees questions and discussion. As the largest employer in its area it was important that the Council maintained an effective working relationship with Sellafield.

RESOLVED – That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Had reviewed the content of the report;
- 2) Supported the Council in engaging proactively and collaboratively with the nuclear sector to deliver the optimum economic and wellbeing benefits for the community;
- 3) Supported the Council and nuclear sector in projecting a strong case to Government and other stakeholders that we are a forward looking community which positively embraced the opportunities that the nuclear sector (and other clean energy sectors) could bring to the community and the UK.
- 4) Supported the Council to work with the nuclear sector while developing its Economic Strategy, with a particular focus on attracting and retaining the skills and resources needed to gain optimum benefits from emerging opportunities.

### **PLOS.37/23 Economic Development - Strategic Issues and Opportunities overview**

The Regeneration Manager submitted a report which provided an overview the proposed approach to be used in the development of an Economic Strategy for Cumberland; the socio-economic profile of the Council area along with the arrangements for the Cumberland Economic Summit.

The Governance and Thriving Communities Portfolio Holder commented that health and wellbeing were at the heart of the Council's activities and that the Economic Strategy would support that. Moreover, it was important that the Council recognised its role and importance in contributing to the strategy as it was a large employer. She further advised that working in a crosscutting way with themes and considering the social value aspect of the strategy were areas she was discussing with officers.

In considering the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

A Member commented that housing provision was an important factor in economic growth as it was often allied with new business generation. He noted the creation of the new St Cuthbert's Garden Village in the Carlisle area and asked if there were any known plans for other garden villages within the Council area?

The Regeneration Manager was not aware of any such plans, the methods of delivering new housing may arise as part of the development of the Cumberland Local Plan.

The Committee discussed the importance of effective transport links to support people in accessing work and contributing to the economic growth of the area. Transport links were particularly important for those in rural areas, and the services needed to be both financially viable and sustainable over the long term.

The Chair asked whether it was known if a new link to the railway was anticipated funded by savings from the amended HS2 project?

The Regeneration Manager responded that he was aware that some reprofiling of HS2 funding across the area was being undertaken and that further details were anticipated.

The Chair indicated that it was an area the Committee may wish to investigate in the future. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer undertook to arrange for some information on the issue to be provided.

The Chair indicated that it was an area the Committee may wish to investigate in the future. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer undertook to carry out some research on the issue.

A Member considered that retention of people in the council area was an important factor in supporting economic growth.

The Governance and Thriving Communities Portfolio Holder agreed and advised that the Strategy would be wider than the economy of jobs and would work with people on what they needed. The Council's Community Panel had generated databases of information about their respective areas and that information was able to be used by officers. The Neighbourhood Investment Plans that were currently being created would develop over time.

The Regeneration Manager added that the Regeneration team were already working closely with the Community Development Team which supported the Community Panels particularly in relation to the Borderlands Place Programme work.

The Chair thanked the Committee for its discussion and noted the importance of continuing to work to develop an Economic Strategy.

**RESOLVED** – That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and provided feedback on:

- 1) The proposed approach to the development of an Economic Strategy for Cumberland;
- 2) The socio-economic profiles and challenges for Cumberland, as set out in Section 2 of the report which formed the context for the Economic Strategy;
- 3) The arrangements for the Cumberland Economic Summit, as set out in Section 3 of the report, that would inform the development of the Strategy;
- 4) That the Policy and Scrutiny Officer arrange for some information on the reprofiling of HS2 funding within the Council area to be provided to the committee.

### **PLOS.38/23 Committee Update Report and Work Programme**

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submitted the Committee Update Report and Work Programme. Members' attention was drawn to the 'Progress on previous resolutions' section report. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that in relation to the Committee's resolution at its 6 September 2023 meeting to recommend to the Executive that budget be found for the creation of a new Empty Homes Officer role, a report had not yet been submitted as work was being carried out to develop service structures. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer suggested that the item be closed on the Committee's report and that she would continue to monitor the progress of the matter through the Executive. The Committee indicated its agreement.

Regarding the Work Programme and the Committee's meeting on 28 February 2024, the Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Waste – implications of government policy and the Environment Agency partner update would be submitted as for information items.

**RESOLVED** – 1) That the items on the most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

2) That the progress on resolutions from previous meetings be noted.

3) That the draft Work Programme 2023/24 be noted.

The meeting finished at 11.54 am