

At a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in The Bainbridge Room, The Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven. CA28 7SJ on Friday, 23 September 2022 at 10.30 am

Members

Councillor Mike Hawkins (Chair)

Councillor Trevor Allison

Councillor Michael Eldon

Councillor Jimmy Gridale

Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes (Sub)

Councillor Stephen Stoddart (Sub)

Councillor Helen Tucker

Councillor Dr Helen Davison

Councillor Joseph Ghayouba

Councillor Linda Jones-Bulman

Councillor Sam Pollen

Councillor Gillian Troughton

Officers Present

S Fawkes (Programme Manager for Local Government Reorganisation), S O’Keeffe (Head of Policy and Communication, Carlisle City Council), S Turnbull (Senior Manager for Communications, Cumbria County Council), R Jones (Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Carlisle City Council), J Rasbash (Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor, Cumbria County Council), E Adair (Communications and Engagement Officer, Copeland Borough Council) and R Blaney (Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Copeland Borough Council).

Also Present

Councillor Lisa Brown

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Pratt, Lucy Patrick, Robert Betton and John Mallinson and officers Catherine Parkinson and Matt Waning.

2. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

3. Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items to be considered for which the press and public should be excluded from the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 August 2022 were considered.

Councillor Davison noted that in relation to minute number 4 'Draft Cumberland Council Plan', the discussion surrounding the lack of inclusion of climate change/emergency within the draft Cumberland Council plan was not included within the minutes and commented that the final sentence of resolution two needed to be amended to say, "explore opportunities for climate change training for officers".

Councillor Davison also noted that, in relation to minute number 6 'Scrutiny Overview and Work Plan Report', that resolution two was incorrect and needed to be updated to show that the 'away day' referenced was being held on 23rd September 2022 and instead it was a workshop the draft Cumberland Plan held on 26th August 2022.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th August 2022 were signed as a correct record subject to the above agreed amendments.

5. Cumberland Plan - Consultation Response

The Head of Policy and Communication from Carlisle City Council introduced the report and provided the Committee with an overview of the report and presented the plan, covering the key changes that were made from the consultation.

The Senior Manager for Communications from Cumbria County Council reviewed the outcomes of the consultation in further detail, providing the Committee with a further in depth look at the responses and the resulting figures, as well as how those responses were received and collated, while also mentioning the multiple ways that information was shared with the public.

The Committee thanked the officers for the report provided and had a lengthy discussion surrounding the consultation responses to the draft Cumberland Plan.

Councillor Allison asked multiple questions throughout the discussion, these included noting the emphasis on 'public' consultation and querying

if this led to a risk of reactive rather than informed decision making, the extreme pressure that staff are under and whether the continuity of services is a priority for the Executive. The Senior Manager for Communications thanked the councillor for the helpful observation, noting that analysing consultation comments was hard and not black and white process, with the officers still interpreting the data. The Senior Manager also noted that of the responses received documented within the report, 25% were from members of staff. She thanked Councillor Allison for acknowledging the current staff workload, though she highlighted that staff were working hard to ensure the commitment to the councils going forward. The Deputy Leader also noted that it was very important to engage with the public early on, as it allowed the new council to be able to start informing people what is happening.

Councillor Jones-Bulman noted that the Plan would evolve as time went on and highlighted the passionate responses around climate change, commenting that Copeland currently had the Climate Steering Group and the People's Panel who are hoping to remain engaged and keep the conversation ongoing.

Councillor Ghayouba asked multiple questions throughout the discussion, these included asking for further information regarding Community Wealth Building and Social Value and Procurement, asking for improvements to be made regarding customer services and the public being able to seek help. He also queried whether trade unions had been involved, especially with the focus on climate and the transition from high carbon jobs. The Deputy Leader explained that Community Wealth Building is seeing new ways of looking at local economies and how to keep people informed and encouraging large companies to invest locally with jobs and businesses being created. She further explained that Social Value looked at paying the living wage and challenging back on certain decisions being made, with further papers and presentation to come to Scrutiny on this topic, as it is only the start of the project. The Senior Manager for Communications answered that there is a commitment from the Shadow Executive to improve customer services with the Deputy Leader agreeing that structures are looking to be put in place to help improve the services, especially by employing the 'No Wrong Door' policy and using the existing hubs better. The Deputy Leader also confirmed that trade unions had been contacted with an indication that they were interested in working with Cumberland going forward and that Community Wealth Building brings in the transition of jobs, but that further communication would be needed.

Councillor McCarron-Holmes noted that the principles of the Plan were similar to the current principles of the sovereign councils, that communities would be expecting a change, and also asked if the National Park Authority (NPA) had been involved. The Senior Manager for Communications commented that responses had been received from numerous groups and stakeholders, such as LEP, NPA etc. which are currently being collated into a pack for councillors to read. But there are still more responses coming in and, due to the tight time frame for the report, most of the stakeholder responses were unable to be included within the report included in the agenda. However, once they have all been received and collated, officers will make the pack available for councillors to read.

Councillor Pollen noted that the Real Living Wage (RLW) had recently been increased, wondering whether Cumberland would become accredited Living Wage Employers, and whether this could be a discussion Scrutiny and the Council as a whole could have. He also highlighted some of the issues from the consultation responses, such as being able to speak to officer's face to face across Cumberland, working with local parishes and groups, transport and nuclear, commenting that there were further opportunities to investigate and really engage. The Senior Manager for Communications noted that Carlisle, Copeland, and Cumbria all currently have a policy for RLW and that there was a commitment to devolving powers and working better with parish councils and local groups with an increased presence. The Deputy Leader noted that work had already been started on working better with communities, through a steering group, better communication and involving those with the relevant knowledge. She also noted that nuclear engagement was vital and that, as there will be no main Cumberland office building, but rather anchor buildings across the Unitary, this would hopefully improve public access to officers and information.

Councillor Tucker asked if the wording could be changed from 'climate change' to 'climate crisis' or 'climate emergency' to highlight the true situation and queried why the laptops and laptop bags bought for the new councillors were from Amazon and not a local supplier, despite the Leader talking about 'local by default'. The Senior Manager for Communications noted the request for the wording change and agreed that there was a commitment to buy local and would ask the Head of IT to take that comment back and improve. The Deputy Leader highlighted that the

products had been bought before the election by the sovereign councils to hit the ground running after the election.

Councillor Hawkins highlighted that the good consultation response showed that Cumberland was being given a chance by the public, providing the new council with an opportunity to prove that they could bring about positive change through a new approach.

Councillor Davison asked multiple questions throughout the discussion, these included asking if the consultation responses in the report were just from the online survey, querying how the data is being analysed, wondering if the analysis enabled themes to be pulled out, she noted that more needed to be said about issues such as biodiversity and highlighted that future proofing, such as by thinking globally and acting locally, was needed. The Head of Policy and Communication noted that all responses will be pulled together and become a useful evidence base for policy and strategy. The Senior Manager for Communications answered that Cumberland will benefit from the rich data, and that other than offensive comments, all responses have been included, however, due to the tight turnaround for the report, the analysis done has not been as in-depth but further detailed work is being done which will allow for further analysis to highlight themes. The Senior Manager for Communications also confirmed that the responses in the report are both from online and written replies.

One of the key discussion points was around the use of the term 'Plan' and whether the term 'vision' would be more appropriate. It was decided that the term 'Plan' would be kept as it would be the starting point for creating a long-term plan and that it was too late to change the term as that may cause confusion for members of the public. It was also noted that, while Westmoreland & Furness Council have used the term 'Framework' this means that they now must create a plan, whereas Cumberland can now build on what they have created. Such as by adding more information, which was the leading issue that councillors, staff, and members of the public commented through the consultation and the discussion within the Committee. The Head of Policy and Communication highlighted that the version of the Plan presented to the Shadow Council in October will be the Cumberland Plan adopted from 1st April 2023, but that it is still only the first plan and can be reviewed and any unanswered questions can be answered within the covering report.

It was also noted that any further questions, comments, or other feedback should be provided to the relevant Portfolio Holder and be done as soon

as possible due to the tight timescales for the report due to the Shadow Cumberland Full Council in October.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The consultation undertaken and the responses provided on the draft Cumberland Council Plan as contained in Appendix B of the report be noted,
- b) The intention that as the new organisation stabilises and transforms the Plan will be reviewed be noted, and
- c) Any comments on the draft Cumberland Council Plan, Appendix A, be provided to the Portfolio for Policy and Performance in advance of the Shadow Council meeting on 18th October.

6. Local Government Reorganisation Programme Status Report

The Programme Manager for Local Government Reorganisation, provided the Committee with an overview of the report, highlighting the key aspects such as the action plan for day one readiness, the key strategic risks along with the risk management and change control structure. She noted that the day one board reports are provided weekly to the technical leads with all risks being scored, managed and tracked.

Councillor Ghayouba asked if there were any issues around Copeland's outstanding accounts and the current governance arrangements, as well as if the manager was comfortable around the Copeland issues and if it needed to be noted as a risk with an appropriate score. The Performance Manager and Deputy Leader both noted that they were unable to comment on this as this was an issue for the Section 151 officer to deal with when looking at the Medium Term Financial (MTF) Plan and the budgets for the new council. But assured the Committee that this issue would be looked at.

Councillor Allison noted that the risk score set against Adult Social Care (25) was a serious issue and asked if it would be possible to consider hosting the service or if it was too late. The Programme Manager highlighted that 25 was the highest score a possible risk could be attributed, but, noted that since the Programme Board met in August the data split has started progressing and the risk has now been re-scored accordingly with no need for hosting.

Councillor McCarron-Holmes asked if the legal advice sought for the critical contracts had been received. The Programme Manager informed the Committee that the legal advice sought had been received for all but four out of 140 cases and they were now moving towards the closing process with the officer decisions taken being based on the legal advice. The Committee were also informed that for some contracts, the legal advice will continue, but that there is a deadline date of the 30th September 2022 for the outstanding advice.

Councillor Davison thanked the Programme manager for the report and for taking on board the issues that councillors had raised regarding the number of acronyms that they had been struggling to understand and limiting them within the report, although it was asked that the acronym SCPCM be expanded. Councillor Davison also asked if there were any risks that were increasing and having questions being asked about them, as well as if a decision has been made regarding which services to split and, with the costs of services still being reviewed, will splitting a service increase the cost, keeping in mind that LGR was brought in to try and save money. The Programme Manager answered that SCPCM stands for Strategic Commissions, Procurement and Contract Management, but will be referred to as Strategic Commissions from now on within reports rather than the acronym. The Manager also noted that items previously flagged are being monitored, such as the need for a technical lead for Legal and Democratic Services which has now been found. As for risks, the Programme Manager commented that the ICT theme was a risk which included external supplier costs. Regarding the decision around splitting services, this was agreed in the blueprints by the Shadow Executive. As for costs, the Programme Manager noted that Implementation Reserve was being monitored closely, with addition costs being flagged as potential pressures and there being a limit on both current but also future costs with considerations being made and discussions being had. The Deputy Leader commented that projects are at different stages of decisions and that there is a transitional period where it can be considered what is the best option for each service. The Deputy Leader also clarified that dealing with risks and cost saving is a staggered process with questions still to be asked, but that the Executive were not putting people at risk with their decision. Both the Programme Manager and Deputy Leader were unable to elaborate further due to commercial sensitivity.

Councillor Troughton asked if time was being allocated to allow for training or familiarisation to new systems. The Programme Manager noted that this is being considered.

Councillor Ghayouba asked if LGR was on aim to bring savings with the shared services and disaggregation, as well as the proposed and actual cost and savings of LGR. The Programme Manager noted that the business cases that were put forward for LGR did not have the data of how much it would cost regarding disaggregation and that it would take around five to seven years before the business case saving could be implemented fully. The Programme Manager also noted that the breakdown of the proposed costs can be seen within the Implementation Reserve and that a budget will be set for the 1st April for Cumberland, with further information being received monthly. The Deputy Leader noted that the speed of Cumberland being brought into being is faster than other Unitaries and that Heads of Services are being thorough with their reporting. The Deputy Leader also noted that savings will come out of budgets and MTFPs and is something to keep an eye on while the process is ongoing.

RESOLVED – That the report details and key points included within section 3 of the report be noted.

7. Scrutiny Overview and Work Plan Report

The Scrutiny Officer provided the Committee with an overview of matters related to the Committee's work, including an update on the resolutions from the previous meeting, the most recent Forward Plan of Key decisions, the current version of the Scrutiny Work Plan and an update on the proposed scope to the Cumberland Scrutiny Task & Finish Group.

The Chair noted that Task & Finish Groups are open to all and it is important for all to contribute to allow for those from different places and with experiences on different councils to have their say.

Councillor Troughton asked when the committee structure for statutory committees was going to be put in place, to allow for councillors to understand district issues, especially with Planning. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to take that as a question for the next meeting.

Councillor Pollen asked if the Cost of Living Crisis mentioned on page 78 of the agenda pack was a Task & Finish Group or for all councillors and commented on the need for ongoing training to avoid poor scrutiny. The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Cost of Living Crisis will be taken as an item to provide a summary on the work done by the sovereign authorities.

Regarding training, it was suggested that a rolling programme of workshops which will focus on specific topics to be held after a meeting be the best way forward.

Councillor Davison noted that how Cumberland scrutinise will be key and that lessons need to be learned from the sovereign authorities Overview and Scrutiny Committees. She also asked what the thoughts were of the Committee around numbers on Task & finish Groups and the best way to ensure good representation. The Scrutiny Officer agreed that lessons should be taken from the sovereign authorities and will be considered within the proposed Task & Finish Group. As to numbers, he noted that it would be dependent on interest, and then represented areas and political groups would be considered before numbers would be confirmed for the Task & Finish Groups.

Councillor McCarron-Holmes asked if the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny had been involved. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that they had been contacted and will aim to have them involved further.

Councillor Allison noted his current workload and highlighted that this might cause an issue for other councillors. The Chair noted that Task & Finish Groups are open to all non-Executive members.

Councillor Ghayouba highlighted that Task & Finish Groups, unlike Committee meetings, could be held virtually which would ease the pressures of travel times, which the Scrutiny Officer confirmed.

RESOLVED – that,

- a) The items on the most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted,
- b) The current work programme, work planning activity and comments on the work programme, particularly on items for the next Committee meeting, be noted,
- c) The scope for the proposed Cumberland Scrutiny Task & Finish Group be agreed, and
- d) The question regarding the statutory committees be taken to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.37 pm

