

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: Thursday, 7th July, 2022
at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors Cassidy (Vice-Chair), Gawne, Hall, McEwan, McLeavy, Morgan, Robson and C. Thomson.

Officers Present: Susan Roberts (Director of Resources) and Caroline Wagstaff (Safe and Strong Communities Manager).

7 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence had been submitted from Councillor Hall.

8 The Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and Access to Information (Variation) Order 2006

Discussion arising hereon it was:-

RESOLVED:- That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 (Minute No. 14) of Part One of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

9 Declarations of Interest

Councillor McEwan declared an Other Registrable Interest in Agenda Item 8 – Anti-Social Behaviour Town Centre Update. His Son was employed by Cumbria Constabulary.

10 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th May, 2022 were taken as read and confirmed.

11 Public Participation

RESOLVED:- Acting Inspector 1240 Joanne Smith from Cumbria Constabulary had attended the meeting and addressed the Committee in respect of Agenda Item No. 8 – Anti-Social Behaviour Town Centre Update (Minute No. 12)

No deputations or petitions had been received in respect of the meeting.

12 Anti-Social Behaviour Town Centre Update

Caroline Wagstaff the Safe and Strong Communities Manager reported that the purpose of the report was to give Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee an update on action being taken by the Safe and Strong Communities Team in partnership with other agencies locally in relation to recent anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre.

Over recent months there had been a surge in anti-social behaviour within the Town Centre causing damage to many of the empty shops. An initial meeting had been held with all partners at the beginning of June to establish intelligence gathering. Since the meeting a targeted approach had been used from intelligence gathered.

Anti-social Behaviour Contracts (ABC) had been served on individuals identified, this was the first stage in formal action in line with recently approved ASB Strategy. The Council's approach was to initially engage with individuals involved in ASB to educate them on the impact of their behaviour if there was no improvement and ASB persists legal action would be taken.

Formal interviews had taken place with parents of the individuals giving advice on the next stage of legal action and the implications of this action. Since this action had taken place Police had confirmed reports of ASB had reduced.

A further meeting had taken place with the BID, Public Protection, Safe and Strong Communities Team Manager, Police, Youth Intervention Projects, Drop Zone, Education Welfare by working together in a partnership approach an action plan could be formulated.

Youth Intervention and Drop Zone were looking at Projects to engage individuals involved in ASB to encourage them to take ownership of an art project rather than graffiti and activities over the summer months.

Links had been made with Crime and Prevention Officer in West Cumbria looking at Mobile CCTV which had been successfully used in Carlisle for tackling ASB in communities. The Tactical Support Unit (TSU) at Cumbria Police were working with Safe and Strong Communities Team to facilitate this.

The Safe and Strong Communities Team were working with partners in the third sector for proactive removal of offensive graffiti as a priority.

Joanne Smith addressed the Committee and provided an update on the arrangements being made by Cumbria Police to target the Anti-Social Behaviour in the town centre.

The Committee were informed that officers had been directed to cover the area and a problem programme had been created which meant officers needed to patrol the area.

The Committee asked that a general invitation be sent out to committee members for the meetings taking place.

RESOLVED:-

1. To note the contents of the report in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy; and
2. To agree the partnership approach to addressing anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre.

13 Work Programme Update

The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer presented the Work Programme Update and reported that Work Groups had been established to review the topics identified in the 2022/2023 Work Programme. A summary of the progress made in respect of each topic was detailed in the report.

Flooding on Walney Promenade

Members would be aware that in October 2021, representatives from United Utilities had addressed the Committee and provided an update on the plans being made for the sewer network to prevent flooding on Walney Promenade. They had agreed to provide updates to the Committee as appropriate in the future as works progressed.

At a previous meeting, the Committee had requested the Scrutiny and Democratic Services Team Leader to make contact with United Utilities to establish if they were in a position to provide an update. United Utilities had advised that with the area being a SSSI (Site of Specific Scientific Interest) site, they were not able to start the work until permits had been issued from Natural England and the Marine Maritime Industry. They would be in touch once permits had been received and works had started, in order to attend the next available meeting.

Discretionary Housing Fund and Supported Housing Payments

At a previous meeting of the Committee the Chair had raised that this review had been taken out of the Committee's hands which they had originally been tasked to do. The Committee had requested that contact be made with the Chair of the Executive Committee to obtain an update on the issue. The review had been paused for the time being whilst further discussions took place regarding the scope of the review.

This review had been initiated by Cllr Ann Thomson, Leader of the Council. Following the meeting, she had been contacted to seek clarity on the scope of the review. However, it had since been agreed by the Executive Committee at their meeting on 9th March, as part of the Annual Review of the Constitution, to recommend the Council to agree that the Leader of the Council should not sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At the meeting on 24th March the Committee agreed that the review would continue and Councillor Morgan be appointed Lead Member on the Work Group.

Impact of Covid-19 Going Forward

The Work Group had met on 7th February. Information had been noted including:-

- The number of cases in Cumbria throughout January had reduced, with the most significant reduction seen in the second week of January, then a steady decline thereafter;
- The rolling seven day average number of cases in Barrow at the time had been around 500 cases per 100,000 population which was similar to the other Districts in Cumbria. It was envisaged that case numbers would likely remain at that level as the Omicron variant was highly transmissible;

- It was anticipated that by the end of March, isolation rules would be lifted, although it was envisaged that PCR testing would remain in some form to test for new variants;
- The Council's Contact Tracing Team continue to assist the NHS Test and Trace System by contacting 'hard to reach' cases;
- Covid Marshalls had reduced to one session per fortnight on a Saturday morning at the Alfred Barrow Health Centre with around 500 vaccinations each session plus walk-ins.

At the meeting on 24th March the committee noted that with rising case numbers and the virus still very active in the community, the Work Group would continue to meet regularly.

Councillor McEwan provided the committee with an update on the most recent Covid Figures, in the week beginning 27th June Barrow had 162 cases.

The Committee asked whether the Council's social media could start to push out communication regarding Covid again.

Crellin Street

At a previous meeting, the Committee had agreed that a Work Group be established to look further into ongoing issues in the Crellin Street vicinity emanating from food takeaway delivery services including parking on double yellow lines, obstructing delivery wagons and other road users, as well as reports of residents feeling intimidated walking past crowds of Uber Eats Drivers.

Following the initial meeting of the Work Group on 8th February, Members of the Work Group had requested for additional representatives to be invited to meet with them including Graham Barker (Head of Public Protection, Barrow Borough Council), as well as a representative from the Police and Cumbria County Council.

At a previous meeting Councillor McEwan provided an update to the Committee stating that Barrow Local Committee had presented the issue to Cumbria County Council's Cabinet the previous week where the Cabinet had agreed to support Barrow Local Committee's request and explore the process and feasibility of adopting the DVLA devolved powers from the Secretary of State for Transport to take enforcement action on untaxed vehicles. In view of that, the Committee agreed that this review should be paused.

Councillor McEwan informed the Committee that they were still waiting on an update from the DVLA.

Customer Strategy and Action Plan

At the Committee meeting on 24th March it had been agreed that a review of Customer Strategy and Action Plan be included in the Work Programme for 2022/23.

Growing Forward Report and Action Plan

At the Committee meeting on 24th March it had been agreed that a review of the Growing Forward Report and Action Plan be included in the Work Programme for 2022/23.

Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy

At the Committee meeting on 24th March it had been agreed that a review of the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy be included in the Work Programme for 2022/23.

A report on the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy was being presented under a separate item on the agenda.

Equality Strategy and Action Plan

At the Committee meeting on 24th March it had been agreed that a review of Equality Strategy and Action Plan be included in the Work Programme for 2022/23.

RESOLVED:-

1. To note the updates on progress in respect of each of the Work Groups; and
2. To agree that Covid reminder communications be sent out on Social Media.

Local Government Act 1972 - Excluded Items

It was moved by Councillor McEwan and seconded by Councillor Morgan that the meeting moved into Part Two, and

RESOLVED:- That the items to be taken in Part Two of the Agenda be dealt with following the exclusion of the press and the public.

14 Supported Accommodation

The Director of Resources presented the Supported Accommodation report and reported that a deep dive into the supported accommodation scheme was included in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan. This report sought to explain how the matter had been dealt with through the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED:- To note the updates set out in the report

The meeting closed at 3.16 pm.