

EDC Council Meeting 29th April 2021.

1. Chairman's Comments (Andy Connell).

(a) There will be elections in early May, including at Skelton and Alston.

(b) The leisure centres at Appleby and Penrith have reopened. Cashless parking has come to Penrith.

(c) The next phase has started for the Green Homes grant. More funding will be available through the Ecoflex scheme.

(d) Patterdale has received £130k from EDC for affordable housing in the area. This is in addition to £185k. The Eden Community Housing Fund provides money for this purpose.

2. Questions from the Public.

Jonathan Davies of Cumbria First asked the Leader, Virginia Taylor (VT) (LD), why she is delaying devolution of assets to parish councils. This risks parish councils losing control of ownership. The leader answered that the resolution (to delay devolution) will delay the deadline. He asked further what the financial consequences would be. Virginia Taylor answered that March 2022 was the deadline and if things were not sorted out, the services might be lost in parishes where they were not taken on.

Jeff Thomson of Fresh Air for Penrith asked about the planning application from Omega Proteins. He said that his organisation had collected 1250 signatures to petition against the planning application. There had been seven planning applications. He said that there had been a lack of transparency at EDC concerning the planning applications from Omega Proteins. Virginia Taylor answered that EDC is not a free agent and is constrained by the law. If there is no material planning objection to a planning application, EDC cannot oppose it. She said that she had opposed extension of the site in the past.

3. Questions from Members.

Debra Wicks (DW) (C) questioned the £750k allocated to Voreda House. How much of this was allocated to consultants for feasibility. VT answered that £30k had been allocated for a feasibility study. This was to look at how to liaise with art and cultural organisations. DW asked what was the scope and remit of the feasibility study. VT answered that she did not have the tender in front of her. DW asked if the design of conversion achieve zero carbon status and what will be the exact costing of the design. VT answered that currently it is not zero carbon.

Gordon Nicholson (GN) (C) asked why hadn't wider consultation of the public been considered for this historical building. VT answered that a cultural use is an appropriate one. The appointed architects have been looking at the fabric of the building. GN went on to ask about the expense of consultants involved and the costs to EDC. Karen Greenwood (KG) (I) said that a written answer would be provided. GN went in to say that inviting executive members onto the scrutiny committees should be avoided.

4. Motion on Notice: Devolution of Assets to Parish Councils.

VT said she had been attending webinars on devolution of assets. Successful transfers take a long time, you move at the speed of trust. In Eden we have some very small parishes. The dialogue needs to be undertaken afresh. She said that she wanted to immediately rescind the deadline and instruct officers to work with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to devise a

new plan to cut costs. At this point, I spoke on behalf of Alston Moor Parish Council, saying we would be very happy with this motion, as we have been worried about the cost of footway lighting and the public toilets. Mike Eyles (ME) (LD) said he is grateful for this as some parish councils would not be able to afford to maintain public toilets. Joan Raine (C) said she could not support this motion. GN (C) said that this is a significant change in policy and normal practice would be for an officer's report to be presented and why were we looking at it via a motion on notice? We don't have any information on the legal and financial implications of the motion. We should have a level playing field. Some parish councils have reduced costs. He requested an amendment: EDC offers to reimburse expenditure incurred by adopting parish councils and refund all parish councils on an equal financial basis.

Elaine Martin (EM) (C) said that she is Heskett Parish Council's chair and they adopted footway lights and have paid £14k. This caused the Heskett a significant increase in the precept. Heskett has 29 of these lights. She asked whether they will receive a refund for the money that has been paid?

Ian Chambers (C) said that the deadline (March 22) should be adhered to.

ME said that what this had shown was what a bad idea it had been to offload essential services to parish councils. He said that he has asked before what would have happened if Penrith Council had not taken in the public toilets and he was told they would have gone.

Neil McCall (LD) said that a blanket refund should not be offered if it is not known what this is for.

DW said that this should not be a motion on notice, it is a complicated decision and we need the advice of officers. We need to look at public toilets and how they can be protected.

A vote was taken on Gordon Nicholson's amendment and it lost by 19 votes to 12.

JR (C) proposed a further amendment to extend the deadline to March 23 or until there was a scrutiny review. Lisa Tremble (Monitoring Officer) said we need to look for clarity. This motion was also defeated.

Henry Sawry-Cookson (I) said that residents should not have to pay for public toilets which they do not use.

VT said that the process has been very patchy. Some parishes feel that they have not been treated fairly. What this motion recommends is not having a deadline. Members and officers will be able to develop a policy which is acceptable to all, with the assets maintained for the future.

A vote followed and the motion was passed with 21 for, 3 against and 7 abstentions.

5. On the 23rd of March, The Human Resources and Appeals Committee met and recommended the appointment of acting chief executive, Jason Gooding to be shared with Carlisle City Council. The appointment would be until 31 December 2021.

The next meeting will be the annual meeting on the 27th of May.