

## Eden District Council Meeting 23.9.2021

### 1. Chairman's Announcements: Andy Connell

Eden has become a member of UK 100: a group of councils who have prioritised the target to become carbon zero by 2030. There is a by-election in Penrith West, due to retirement of John Thomson. Recently Housing 21 finished 21 houses for the elderly in Penrith. There has been new investment in Penrith and Appleby football fields. The Park Run has returned to Penrith. Recently there were over 200 participants. The Appleby Fair Committee has raised various issues about the recent fair. The Great Big Green Week, which supports climate action, has been celebrated across Cumbria.

### 2. Questions from Members.

There were no questions from the public.

David Ryland: All the paper used by EDC comes from Brazil. Could we make sure there is good governance,

Mark Rudhall: The paper comes from Heitons in Penrith. There is no paper from the UK. The choice is the best value. We are committed to reducing the carbon footprint.

DR: You can't put a price on valuing the climate. Could we have recycled paper. I previously submitted a question on utilities at Voreda House (which will be the new council building). £8,000 was paid to Waterplus. Was this a bill from the previous owner?

Karen Greenwood: In April £8859 was paid after taking possession of Voreda House. Officers protested to Waterplus about the bill and subsequently £7400 was refunded, so the net bill was £1300.

DR: There is a severe backlog of 40 cases within planning enforcement. These are time limited and may expire.

Virginia Taylor: There has been no significant increase in cases over the last year. Cases have to be investigated. There are two part-time staff dealing with this. No income is generated by this activity. The current backlog is closer to 200 rather than 40. There are limited staff to deal with this.

Joan Raine: Asked about the number of EV charging points that were planned. She said she had read that a charging point in Appleby would have to be scrapped because it would cost £110k to provide a substation to run the charging point.

MR: I was not aware of the need for a substation. If so, additional funding will be sought.

### 3. Appointment of Interim Chief Executive of EDC.

Karen Greenwood: The pandemic and local government reorganisation has caused a lot of stress in our senior officers. I want to recommend Ian Frost as interim Chief Executive Officer. There is an additional budget of £58k for the rest of this financial year and an additional £195k for the year 2022-2023. (The annual income of the CEO will be £253k).

Gordon Nicholson: How do you justify this salary? We are a small council.

Phil Dew: We have to link 3 very different districts ( in LGR: Eden, Barrow and South Lakes). What does Ian Frost possess to justify £353k per annum. He has worked for Allerdale (as CEO). It is very important that we have the right person here.

Mary Robinson: There was a great debate in the Human Resources and Appeals Committee. To say that he lacks the ability is the wrong thing to say. The decision made by HR and Appeals was completely unanimous (to approve the appointment). We had a small pool to choose from and the proper process was followed.

John Lynch: £253,000! Does that include pension contributions? No! I am incandescent with rage about this. Its absolutely scandalous.

DR: We didn't debate this in the HR and Appeals Committee. It was in the pink papers (confidential). Were you aware of the financial burden? How many applicants were there?

MR: Four initially, two dropped out. This is the market rate for fixed term contracts for chief executives. The amount was in the pink papers.

GN: The prime minister earns £157k per annum, a cabinet minister £148k, the chief executive of Birmingham City Council earns up to £207k per annum. Then we come to little Eden District Council proposing to pay £253k per annum. This sum is out of all proportion and we could have got someone at a very much reduced rate. The matter of remuneration has to be revisited.

Mike Eyles: I was on the HR and Appeals Committee. We had long debates on the matter. We had comparisons with other chief executives. We are in a temporary position, we desperately need someone at the helm and we can't afford to wait for another appointment. This person will probably be in position for another 18 months.

DR: Speaking as a member of the budget planning committee, I am annoyed that we haven't put in the amount we paid for the previous chief executive. I feel we are having a gun put to our heads.

Debra Wicks: Is the the CE going to be working fully at EDC?

MR: Yes, 5 days per week.

Henry Sawry-Cookson: This is an excessive amount for a cash-strapped council to have to pay.

N. McCall: I used to work in IT. I could have got a lot more doing short-term contract jobs.

Paul Suuton (officer): We pay pension and NI contributions for permanent staff.

KG: I understand the concerns about the salary. The workload that is coming up in the next 18 months is massive. The new authority will probably last another fifty years. Its important to get it right. The money is there in the reserves. The roof is leaking now and we need to use that money. The salary is the market rate for short term work. Mr Frost is experienced and knows the political landscape.

Vote: for: 21, against: 11, abstain: 1.

4. Allocation of Committee Seats: I remain on three committees: Overview and Scrutiny, Licencing and Planning. Lissie Sharp remains on the executive committee as a member of the governing group.

5. Eden Housing Strategy 2021-2026.

This document was presented by Judith Debyshire. Stress is put on affordability and innovative design to to reduce running costs and decrease carbon emissions. Older people should be encouraged to have the right size of home that is comfortable to live in. Overall median house prices have increased from £185k in 2007 to £221k in 2019, an increase of 19.6 %. The local housing need is 242 dwellings per year. The mix should be 60% houses, 31% flats, 7% bungalows and 2% other property types. There are currently 764 units of specialist older person accomodation including 253 residential care places. There needs to be an extra 123 of the residential care places by 2032.

Approximately 5% of total residential housing stock in Eden is classed as a second home. Too many of these can lead to a shortage of available properties. Since 2015, 200 affordable homes have been secured. Further affordable homes will be provided by housing associations, private developers and community led housing schemes. The Warm Homes scheme have helped improve warmth in homes. 34% of private sector properties have category 1 hazard of excessive coldness. There are grants to help owners renovate empty properties so they can be let or sold (grants between £10k and £20k).

Doug Banks thanked EDC for supporting vulnerable people with housing.

## 6 Capital Grant to Improve Penrith Football Stadium.

Lissie Sharp discussed, as Leisure portfolio holder, why this should be supported. £100k is recommended to support various schemes. EDC is the landlord and has responsibility to help the soccer club. We have to make sure that the club thrives and survives. The club provides facilities for communities all over Eden. The club struggles to raise enough money to keep it going. There is a need to upgrade the pitch night lights to LED ones. The pitches also need upgrading. The Football Association will give £600k if EDC gives £100k. 700 football pitches have been lost since 2010, 170 in the northwest, the highest in the country.

DB: The pitch was moved from the centre of the town (New Squares) a few years ago. I inspected the club a few years ago and there was a lot of disrepair. The club has soldiered on giving support to women and children's teams. The grant will help the club to move on and continue to provide the services they do.

D Wicks: I am disappointed that we haven't seen a business plan.

Les Clark (officer): Any subsequent benefits that would accrue from the grant would go back to the club.

VT: In the past, landlord and tenant relationships may have been adversarial. Nowadays the relationship is often cooperative, ensuring that the property is kept in good order. The lease mentions community benefit as part of the duties of the club. It would not help the landlord to allow the property to become useless. The grant is not unfettered. Its restricted to spending on capital improvements.

GN: The amount of spending is about £245k, in excess of £100k.

LC: There are two choices for spending, its not certain where the money will be spent. There are ongoing discussions with the FA.

ME: The previous location of the pitch moved from where the New Squares shopping area is now located. The developer agreed to help the club out, but went bankrupt and this help did not occur. The club moved to the outskirts of town which caused a drop in attendences.

J Lynch: Anyone watching these proceedings would think we are a very wealthy council, £253k and £100k- God help us!

M Tonkin: In 2013 the deficiencies of the new Frenchfield site were noted by the committee. This is a chance to rectify this.

PD: I dont doubt the worth of Penrith FC. I am concerned how this will look to other sports clubs and other outlying areas. Can't the club get grants from other bodies? I feel there is a feeling of guilt as to what has happened to the club to do with the New Squares development in the past.

LS: From 2017 to the present EDC has spent £800k on various leisure and sports projects across Eden, including cricket and football. I would be more worried that the football club would close.

Vote: for: 21, against: 3, abstain: 9.