

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee 12.1.23

Report by Michael Hanley.

Chair: Joan Raine

### 1. Question and Answer Session: Judith Derbyshire (JD, LD), Housing and Health Portfolio Holder.

Nutrient Neutrality is causing significant issues with planning. We are working on mitigation. Recently a 25 housing scheme in Appleby was approved. Concerning Affordable Housing: 4 at Greystoke, 4 at Cathwaite, 41 at Carleton Meadows, 9 at Brougham Fields, Penrith and 4 in Kirkby Stephen. 76 houses at White Ox Way in Penrith. Also 10 affordable homes in Glenridding. The Heart of Cumbria has 55 houses. Housing funding comes from various sources such as Section 106 contributions (from developers building large housing estates): £1.2 million, Disabled Facilities grants: £642k (22-23), Green Homes grant: £6.9 million, Homelessness Fund: £192k, Community Housing Fund: £938k, Domestic Abuse Funding: £125k. In 2021-22 there were 144 homeless people in Eden. The causes were: relationship breakdown, domestic abuse and end of AST (tenancy). There is a predicted increase in homelessness due to asylum seekers and refugees. There are five contingency hostels in Cumbria, two in Carlisle, two in Barrow and one in Copeland. There has been contact with Serco and the Home Office regarding 20 individuals in Eden. These are mainly refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and the Ukraine.

David Ryland (DR, I): Would any of these refugees not be funded by the government?

Amanda Yellowlees (AY, Officer): We have rehoused a couple of families from the Ukraine when the allocated place wasn't suitable.

Private Sector Housing: There has been recent media activity about mould and damp. Recently there has been guidance on this. Also there are regulations concerning carbon monoxide, smoke alarms, electrical and gas checks.

In October 2022 there were 1278 second homes in Eden and 587 empty properties, 900 empty properties in South Lakes and 995 in Barrow (empty for at least 6 months).

The Eden House Affordability ratio in 2022 was 7.7 (times average annual income).

JD: I hope we will be able to do more about empty homes in the future.

GN: It would be interesting to compare the number of holiday lets to second homes and demand for affordable housing. He asked about increased council tax on second homes.

JD: I think the government is looking at this.

Housing Grants: There are Heating System Service grants, up to £750, Empty Homes grants: up to £5k for repairs, Sustainable Warmth grant: £20 million for Cumbria: maximum if £10k for gas, £25k where there is no gas supply. Disabled Facilities Grant: maximum £30k. Repossession Prevention grants: up to £5k.

GN: Are these grants means tested?

JD: Some are, some aren't.

AY: There are criteria to these such as whether the applicant is on benefits.

Margaret Clark (MC, I): What are we doing about the dearth of bungalows?

JD: That is a planning issue.

DR: I think there should be a survey of who is purchasing all these new houses.

Doug Banks (DB, I): There is a new site near me with lots of bungalows and they have all been bought by elderly couples moving in from outside Cumbria.

### 2. Questions and Answers Session: Westmorland and Furness Cabinet Member for Sustainable Communities and Localities.

VirginiaTaylor (VT, LD): Discussed communities being self sufficient and sustainable. VT also has Planning, Arts and Culture and Libraries.

DR: What plans has WAFC for devolution of assets.

VT: There isn't a policy or budget yet. It's a big job. It is important that it will be sustainable.

DR: Is it the plan that WAFC will work with parish councils and CALC (Cumbria Association of Local Councils).

VT: We have agreed to continue to fund CALC. We will fund the parish council elections in May.

DR: I wasn't asking about the funding of elections. I asked about the funding of CALC.

VT: I said at the beginning that we have agreed to fund CALC.

VT discussed the locality boards: there will be three mirroring the current three district councils. The locality boards will have the following functions: delegated decisions and funding, areas of influence, relationships with local partnerships, parish councils, Health services, Third Sector, information and engagement. When the district councils disappear it is important that local knowledge doesn't disappear. The Eden Local Plan will continue as will the local Planning Committee where local members will continue to make planning decisions. The committee has to be politically balanced according to the whole council. We can get around this if every member waives this. There will be 8 members of the Planning Committee (currently 10). There will be a central strategic committee which will look at larger concerns.

DR: Where does the waiver come from?

Graham Simpkins (GS, LD): It's due to the situation. The council as a whole will be politically balanced.

Joan Raine (JR, C): Will there be more funding for community plans?

VT: The actual detail of how we will work with parish councils is still being written. It's going to be fairly lean due to rising inflation. There will be 16 Eden councillors, WAFC total: 65 (currently EDC: 38). We have to make sure that Eden is not forgotten.

Michael Hanley (MH, L): Asked about local Planning Committee meetings after April.

VT: Monthly meetings will continue.

GN: It strikes me that the new councillors in Eden will be very busy. Will all Eden members be members of the locality board.

VT: Yes.

Deb Holden (DH, LD): Central government decided what will happen but are they fully funding this?

VT: No, not a bean.

### 3. Eden District Emergency Response Plan

MH: Asked why local response organisations such as AMERG (Alston Moor Emergency Response Group) are not mentioned in this document.

Laura (L, Officer, I did not get her surname or title): These organisations are mentioned in the appendices (not provided).

MH: They should be included in the main document. In Alston, AMERG has been at the forefront of responses to any emergency such as the Covid pandemic and Storm Arwen. During the pandemic, AMERG was involved with the distribution of food, doing home deliveries of food and prescriptions, transport of patients to the GP surgery for vaccination, prevention of mental health problems with on-line quizzes and outreach to isolated residents. AMERG continues to have regular meetings.

Laura: Said she would relay my comments.

#### 4. Waste Collection in the New Authority

Les Clark ( LC, Deputy Chief Executive): Things will not change on day one.

JR: Will the calendar of collections continue?

LC: Yes.

GN: Eden has 75 bring sites compared to 16 in South Lakes, will these continue?

DB: That's due to the number of villages.

LS: The contract with Urbaser continue until March 2027.

DB: Eden is the only one that uses plastic bags, everywhere else, they use wheelybins. I have a lot of complaints about seagulls causing problems with rubbish in plastic bags.

LC: There is a possibility that this might change.

DR: I would ask that all the work that I and Councillor Holden did on the Waste Task and Finish Group be forwarded to the new council.

LC: Discussed Cumbria Waste Recycling, which is part of Cumbria Holdings, which is owned by Cumbria County Council.

End of meeting.