

Eden Locality Board 11.7.23

Report by Michael Hanley

Chair: John Murray (JM, LD)

1. Petition: Terry Reid

I am concerned about Green Acre Park. The residents are senior citizens mostly over 75 years old. All pay the council tax. There are two issues: 1. An unlit and poorly maintained footpath, 2. flooding caused by blocked drains. I have written a lot of letters to the council over the last three years. On three occasions I have been lied to. It has taken a lot of effort to get satisfaction on this subject.

H Carrick (HC, C): Thank you Mr Reid for attending and voicing the concerns of the residents. I have regularly communicated concerning these two matters. The petition highlights the importance of improving our networks.

M Robinson (MR, I): Thank you Terry. I would like to support Councillor Carrick. We need to focus on footways and footpaths. There is a lot we need to do.

N Hughes (NH, LD): The government cut the national funding for this by two thirds. We are in a compromised position with regard to this problem.

JM: I can't make any promises but we will try to respond to your concerns.

2. Hyperfast Project (Improving internet speed)

Libby Bateman (LB, Fibrus representative): There is a government contract called Project Gigabit. Fibrus won the contract and the project is called Hyperfast GB. It is separate from Openreach. There is £5 billion government funding. It will deliver a £108 million broadband improvement for Cumbria. It will bring next generation broadband to 60,000 homes and businesses in Cumbria. The plan is to survey areas to check the condition of the existing infrastructure and plan where the new infrastructure will go. We will work closely with the National Park Authority to minimise disruption (using underground cabling where appropriate).

There will be 90 apprenticeships with training at Newton Rigg. The current vehicle fleet is 16% electric. The target for the end of 2023 is 30%.

£60k will be invested to address digital poverty.

V. Taylor (VT, LD): Can any internet provider use the network?

LB: As we expand, other internet providers will come on board.

A. Connell (AC, LD): Discussed B4RN provider and its problems.

LB: Discussed the freezing of the voucher scheme and how various communities had got involved with various providers (such as B4RN). The government is reviewing the voucher priority areas. BARN was born in Warcop. Fibrus was cast as the villain, and it wasn't.

AC: What will happen?

LB: Project Gigabit will deliver the fibre (cable).

N Hughes (NH, LD): Whose decision was it to delete the most isolated properties from the project? Was it Fibrus' decision. Could the people in some remote properties be given money to help them connect?

LB: No. We had a look at these places.

MR: Asked about a pot of money to connect properties in Cumbria.

LB: Discussed Gainshare.

MR: Its not just Fibrus. Do we have a time scale?

LB: Talked about a time scale of 18-24 months.

HC: There are various initiatives in my patch: B4RN, Rural Provider 4U. How do these fit in?

LB: I can't speak on behalf of other providers.

MR: The other major provider is Openreach.

HC: Is it possible that several companies could be creating their own infrastructure (cable network). My concern is that we will end up with 4-5 providers (networks).

N Wright (NW, Senior Manager, Safe and Strong Communities): Asked how could councillors inform residents.

LB: We send out regular update (to parish councils).

3. Safe and Strong Communities

NW: Discussed recent councillor workshops and the report to the ELB (Eden Locality Board).

Summary of "Safe and Strong Communities" Report.

Two working groups to be created: one for Highways, Infrastructure and Connectivity and the other for Children and Young People. There will be five members on each.

ELB will have four priorities:

1. Ensure children are happy, healthy and grow up to their full potential.
2. Improve connections by developing networks, infrastructure and modes of travel.
3. Empower communities by supporting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.
4. To consider climate change and biodiversity in everything that the Board does.

There will be eight Place Action Groups. (one for Alston and Fellside).

The Community Budget total will be £136,427. This will comprise: Locality Board Priorities: £33k, Eden Community Fund: £10k, Services: £58k, Money Advice Service: £34k. The council has allocated £17k to support strategic development of youth services. The Children and Young People Working Group will discuss this budget. Citizen's Advice currently deliver the Money and Debt Advice Service.

There is a Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme for school children and young people who receive benefits-related Free School Meals.

The current Health and Wellbeing Forums may be renamed "Health Equity Partnerships".

WFC (Westmorland and Furness Council) have approved plans for a "Smoke-Free" WFC area by 2030. £500k have been committed to this. Smoke-free=the percentage of people who smoke reduced to 5%. Currently the rate is 11%. A 12 week nicotine replacement course would be provided through pharmacies. Staff will be recruited to provide enhanced smoking cessation interventions.

A drive will be made to raise awareness of dementia in the community and raise awareness of the signs and symptoms to encourage earlier diagnosis and promote support.

NW: There will be £250k to improve transport. Each member will have £1000.

NH, Locality Boards are partnership organisations. Other organisations such as voluntary and the NHS should be encouraged to come in.

VT: There is a lot that can be developed. How much parity does there have to be (with the other two locality boards)?

Lisa Tremble (LT, Legal Officer): I understand- how far can we go?

P Dew (PD, C): Other unitary authorities jumped in with both feet. They spent a long time getting nowhere. I don't see that this locality should be the same as Barrow, which is very different.

MR: When we are talking to the parish councils, we need clarity, what is available. £1000 is not going to go far if there are 10 parish councils (as is the case in Alston and Fellside). I would like this to develop into an action plan. We need to have a quick workshop on the back of this.

JM: Discussed the four priorities.

PD: I would like to amend Priority 4 concerning climate change. It should say when this is relevant (not with every decision). This is slightly obsessive. Climate change does not apply to everything.

Pat Bell (PB, LD): Discussed Priority 1. Discussed not excluding children who are not White British. Also said she could not support PD's amendment.

NH: I agree with PB. Climate change could fall through the cracks. Climate change is the most important issue facing mankind, so I can't support Councillor Dew's amendment.

Vote: unanimous in support of the priorities.

JM: Discussed the current five Area Planning Groups (including Alston). Place Action Groups (PAG) would replace these and there would be 8 (Heskett and Lazonby, Penrith, Appleby and Brough, Kirkby Stephen and Tebay, Eden and Lyvennet Vale, Greystoke and Ellswater, Alston and Fellside and Eamont and Shap). The APGs would continue until the PAGs were established.

MR: There should be two PAGs for Alston and Fellside, one for Alston and one for Fellside.

M Hanley (MH, L): I agree, there is very little connection between the two areas.

NW: If we have a workshop, we can have an update on what the APGs are doing.

Members were then appointed to the two working groups: MR (along with four other members) to the Highways one and MH to the Childrens' and Young People.

NH: Asked about a Community Bus Grants Panel,

LT: LT queried whether this was appropriate as it was not on the agenda and there had been no preparation.

PB: It is important to be ahead of the game. I support Councillor Hughes.

NH: Can I modify the proposal? Can I set up a grants panel ?

PD: Why are we having to rush into this like a headless chicken. We need to consider this in detail. We can discuss this at the next meeting.

NH: We need to be able to deal with any such application.

PD: I do drive a community bus. We shouldn't rush a decision.

PB: We have a proposal on the table.

MR: The proposal is for a grants panel not a bus panel.

LT: You need criteria for your grants panel. You can bring that back to the next meeting.

PB: We set up other groups and asked officers to sort out the details.

NW: Would the grants panel make the decisions or the locality board?

LT: I think that the grants panel would make the recommendation (to the locality board).

NH: Section 22 voluntary transport service would be eligible for a subsidy.

PB: Could we not nominate five people for a prospective panel.

VT: I am unwilling to commit to anything at this stage. I don't know whether decisions concerning grants should be done by the cabinet (in Kendal).

VT was appointed to the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

4. Travers Institute

This is a registered charity based in Mallerstang which oversees the village green. It has always had an Eden District Councillor on the institute. Previously this was the chair of the council. JM was appointed.

5. Urgent Items

PD: We haven't heard a word about Voreda House. Also asked about £110k in the community fund.

JM: I will ask for a report on Voreda House. There was a report on this community fund. I will make sure that a report about this gets to this board.

End of meeting.