

**Cumbria Third Sector Network
Executive Meeting 21 October 2014
FINAL Minutes**

Present: Will Williams (Chair), Andy Beeforth (Deputy Chair), Lorraine Smyth (Rurality), Cath Clarke (CYP), Nick Kennon (Safer Communities), David Blacklock (Healthwatch), Helen Boothroyd (Faith), Martin Telford (Advice and Information), John Clasper (Housing), Sonia Mangan (Health and Wellbeing Board), John Brown (Health and Wellbeing), Karen Bowen (Generic Third Sector Support).

In attendance: Steve Lax (C3C), Carolyn Otley (Coordinator – Minutes), Patricia Bell (CCC – Item 1 only), Georgina Ternent (CCC – Item 1 only)

1. Cumbria County Council – Strategic Planning and Budget

Patricia Bell explained the new Cabinet portfolios; she is now Deputy Leader, and will have responsibility for Finance and Strategic Planning, whilst Ian Stewart now has the Communities and Public Health portfolio (which included the third sector).

The Budget Consultation will be launched on Thursday (23 October) and will run until 20 January 2015. Changes as a result of last year's budget have already saved £130m, but there is a need to save a further £31m this year, and £81m over the next 3 years. The grant from central government to the local authority continues to decrease, and it is possible that in the future there will be no grant, just a few core contributions.

This means that CCC needs to make radical changes – to both its culture and its services – and some activities which aren't a statutory responsibility are likely to stop. In some areas, CCC is hoping to invest to save – for example, by building a modern office block in Carlisle and selling off older buildings. Some services are already working differently – for example, libraries changing the way they work, Early Years services, a number of services pulled together into Cumbria Advice and Support Team.

During the consultation there will be detailed conversations with interest groups, and directly with communities.

There will be more area based working in future – the six Area Support Managers are now in post – including empowering local councillors to have conversations with residents.

Allerdale – Lizzy Shaw
Barrow – Tracey Ingham
Carlisle – Ted Thwaites
Copeland – Gillian Elliott
Eden – Paul Dodson
South Lakeland – Karen Johnson

Details of each area team (other team members and contact details) can be found by clicking on the appropriate part of the map on this link:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/yourcommunitysupport/yourlocalarea.asp>

Some of the proposals will be about savings in future years, and these need to be discussed too.

Cath asked how it was planned to make changes to Early Years as these services were currently out to tender on an 8 year contract. Patricia explained that groups tendering already know about the proposals, but that it's also to do with work such as Health Visitors that moves to CCC next year.

Patricia explained that CCC was also making enormous savings from internal change in addition to the changes to services that require public consultation. The consultation will also ask the public for their views on 3 key questions on working differently, and she would be grateful for any focused conversation on these. There should be some choice this year about where the £31m of cuts will be made, but there will still be £30m of as yet unidentified cuts to make over the next 3 years.

Cath noted that at a recent Children and Young People's Reference Group meeting there had been good suggestions about short breaks and how to contract in order to actually meet needs. Patricia agreed that this had been a successful attempt to break into the commissioning cycle and influence service design.

Jozi noted that there seemed to be many conversations going on about "single points of contact" within CCC and the Partnership Trust, and it would be useful to join these up. Patricia responded that she would take this as a request, and see if it could be explored through the budget conversation.

Patricia ended with a request that, once the consultation document was available, that the sector asked for more information if necessary before they passed judgement.

ACTION 1: Carolyn to circulate budget consultation document when available and Carolyn & Georgina to identify key issues for the Third Sector and the process for addressing these

2. Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Liz Clegg (Transport), Becky Underwood (Sport and Physical Activity), Stephanie Crosthwaite (Children and Young People), Aftab Khan (Equality and Diversity), Rob Randell (Economy and Enterprise), Judith Holmshaw (Volunteering) and Graham Jackson-Pitt (Environment).

Will welcomed two new members to the group – John Brown (Health and Wellbeing) and John Clasper (Housing).

3. Minutes of last meeting

Agreed with no amendments to the circulated version (which incorporate a change to the original version to change "minimum wage" to "living wage").

4. Actions and Matters Arising from minutes of July Meeting

The following points were discussed in addition to the written update:

Action 5 – Lorraine, Helen and Martin all attend the Social Inclusion Forum

Action 6 – Andy prepared paper on Fair Finance for the CLB – currently back with the District Councils.

Action 7 – Carolyn suggested local implementation of Welfare Reform Commission finding could be looked at by local committees – need to follow up now staff are in post.

ACTION 2: Carolyn to follow up with Area Managers

Action 8 – No further information on the thrust of the Housing Paper CALC plan to present to the December CLB meeting. Martin noted that CAB held a Legal Aid contract around housing issues, and would so have some data on housing issues.

ACTION 3: Carolyn to circulate Housing Paper when available (probably a week before 12 December CLB meeting)

Action 10 - Rob was not present at the meeting, but other members of Executive believed that the last iteration of the Cumbria bid for EU funding was due with national government in January, and spend would be later than that. Karen noted that there was £10k of Big Lottery money to support third sector engagement – Cumbria CVS will be delivering this, and it will be announced on Thursday.

Action 11 – The Compact Conference will take place on 6 November. There is also Compact training taking place with the CCC Procurement Team (and some other public sector staff) this week.

Action 14 – There was discussion around if the third sector had, or should have, an overall position on the living wage. Martin noted there were some differences of opinion on how widely it should be applied – for example, Allerdale BC were saying it should apply to apprentices, but this is not a requirement of the national Living Wage Campaign (as apprentices benefit from other forms of investment from the employer). It was agreed that this should be on the agenda for the next Executive meeting.

ACTION 4: Carolyn to ask Corrina for summary of third sector responses to the Living Wage questionnaire, and to include Living Wage on the agenda for the January Executive meeting.

5. Cumbria Third Sector Consortium (C3C)

Steve Lax introduced a written paper from C3C exploring possible relationships between the Executive and C3C.

Steve explained that C3C is a bidding consortium of Cumbria-based third sector organisations. There are currently 36 members, 19 involved in the delivery of the Neighbourhood Care Independence programme (which is mid way through its second year of delivery). The C3C Board are keen to explore the possibility of C3C representation on the Executive – they feel this would help with their strategic development. However, they are aware that they are “a consortium” not “the consortium”, and also want to make sure any involvement in the Executive does not compromise their contracting position. They are therefore keen that the Executive discuss the matter and let C3C know their thoughts.

Discussion covered the following points:

- There are benefits to having a mechanism that gives one voice for the third sector when it comes to public sector policy/strategy development
- However, it’s also important to be able to differentiate between representation on behalf of users and representation as a provider (even through a single organisation might do both at different times) – and the Executive can prove a useful mechanism for this.

- C3C’s approach the Executive had already triggered contact by other consortia – it was suggested that there might be benefits to involving other consortia too. Involving just a single consortia could be seen to give them an advantage.
- Consortia may already have a voice through the Social Enterprise Partnership
- C3C (or any other consortia) does not appear to fit with other specialist networks, unless perhaps they were to form a “contracting” network – but this is still somewhat different to the existing thematic specialist networks which represent groups working in a particular field or with a particular kind of user. It was also noted that the competitive nature of bidding didn’t necessarily fit easily with forming a network of consortia.
- There are a couple of groups (Compact Steering Group, Healthwatch) who attend Executive meetings but are not a specialist network
- Steve noted that C3C would discuss the issue further at a Board Meeting in mid November.

It was decided that:

- C3C (or any other bidding consortium) did not appear to fit as a Specialist Network of Cumbria Third Sector Network
- That leaves the possibility of another relationship, which would need to be defined by a memorandum of understanding
- This would be explored if appropriate following C3C’s discussion at the November Board Meeting.

ACTION 5: Carolyn to report decision to C3C Board and follow up after November if an alternative relationship is proposed.

6. Cumbria County Council

The written update was received.

It was agreed that the Executive was likely to need to meet and discuss the Budget Proposals relatively soon after they are released.

ACTION 6: Carolyn to arrange date, possibly as part of Annual Planning Event

7. Housing Specialist Network

John Clasper explained he had been invited to the Executive through Cumbria Housing Partners, and gave a brief introduction to the housing sector and the issues it faces. Key points were:

- The landscape for social housing has changed significantly over the last 10 years – Barrow is the only district council in Cumbria to still provide housing directly
- Social landlords now tend to be referred to as “providers of affordable housing”
- Housing Associations tend to have roles beyond that of a landlord, often working in partnership to tackle disadvantage
- There tend to be different specialisms within different providers – e.g. Eden Housing Association tend to focus on rural issues, and is finding that the most rural properties are becoming less popular (due to poor public transport, no mains gas)

- The bedroom tax has been a significant issue as there are few smaller properties available – figures produced for local politicians showed it would take 16 years to manage to arrange smaller properties for everyone who wanted to downsize
- Universal credit – whilst there is general support for the principle of simplifying benefits, there are some concerns about the implementation and effects on the most vulnerable
- The level of grants for new build have reduced over time, and are now only 15% of the total costs
- Housing Associations have been able to increase rents by more than inflation (regulator ensures they still offer value for money) and so have not been as badly hit by the recession as some organisations

John concluded by explaining that the Housing organisations currently meet up in a number of networks, and these are currently being reviewed. He is happy to act as a conduit to the Housing networks.

ACTION 7: Carolyn to send governance information to John Clasper

It was noted that Housing was on the agenda for the CLB, and it might be useful for John to contact CALC in advance of the meeting.

ACTION 8: Lorraine to put John in touch with CALC

Martin noted that there was a problem with housing providers needing to do affordability checks and lifestyle interviews – this often lead to the most vulnerable being rejected and forced into the private sector. John agreed that this was a definite danger, and that different housing associations took different approaches.

8. Cumbria Leadership Board

Will reported that the last meeting of the CLB had looked at the group's priorities and programme.

The CLB had recognised two additional "key strategic partnerships", the Lake District National Park Partnership and the Cumbria Nature Partnership. Both of these are currently attended by individuals from third sector organisations (Lorraine and Graham respectively) but there needs to be consideration of if there is a need for more formal representation.

The CLB now receives updates from these key strategic partnerships at each meeting, and Richard Rhodes will be presenting more detail about Safer Cumbria at the December CLB meeting.

Andy gave an update on the Welfare Reform Commission – the County Welfare Reform Group is now meeting again to look at a local improvement plan. The DWP "Community 10,000" scheme might be useful in creating staff volunteering opportunities within third sector organisations – Carolyn and Judith will be meeting the NW Coordinator later in the week. DWP are mapping claimant journeys for each of the major benefits, and there is third sector input to this work.

Lorraine noted that in rural areas, people are even more vulnerable, and we need to keep emphasizing that.

ACTION 9: Andy to share Local Improvement Plan with the Executive

The next CLB meeting will also include a presentation from Colin Cox (Director of Public Health), Budget Proposals and Welfare Reform.

9. Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Board

Will explained that the report of the review by the Local Government Association is now available, the proposed new structure has only the statutory membership (which includes Healthwatch), with no third sector representative on the HWB. Will, Andy, Sonia and Carolyn had a brief meeting with Patricia Bell, Georgina Ternent and Richard Parry to explain the sector's concerns with this structure.

Sonia explained that in the proposals the third sector would still have a place on the Public Health Alliance/Committee, but not on the main HWB. These proposals will be discussed at the next HWB, and so Sonia needs clear direction from the Executive about the sector's view on the new model.

It was noted that there was broad agreement that the HWB was not working well, and whilst it was supposed to be doing upstream activity, in reality it was given very downstream work like the Better Care Fund. This is not unique to Cumbria; it is happening in most areas.

The Health and Care Alliance already exists, and is even more "downstream", concentrating on keeping people out of hospital. It is more of a network than an entity, and elected members are generally reluctant to be involved, perhaps as it involves decisions that will be unpopular with the public.

The proposed Public Health Committee where everything comes together. The third sector will be involved here (probably with more than one place, although the details have yet to emerge), but the Health and Wellbeing Board is still the statutory, strategic body.

Discussion covered the following points:

- This is a backwards step.
- Representation at the "top" sends an important message to other groups, and has led to good work (for example, Welfare Reform Commission only happened because of representation on the CLB).
- Third sector groups are told by their national networks that the third sector needs representation on the HWB.
- It is clear that there is a desire to have a much smaller HWB, and the easiest way to justify the choice of new members is to retract to the statutory requirements. The sector can understand this, but does not agree with it.
- There is not yet third sector representation on all the local HWB Forums – but in those areas where there are third sector reps, they feel that third sector representation on the Cumbria HWB is invaluable.

It was agreed unanimously that:

- The Executive could not support the proposed model

11. Cumbria Children's Trust Board

There has been no meeting of the Trust Board.

Key points from the sector are:

- John Macilwraith has been confirmed as Director of Children's Services
- 13 contracts (Early Help) are out for tender, and there are major issues with these (e.g. TUPE value higher than contract value) – some organisations have dropped out as a result. There was a meeting last week to look at this, and there is likely to be £170k available in grants.
- Headstart contract (young people's emotional wellbeing) is also out for tender (expression of interest stage) for services in Carlisle and Barrow.

12. Safer Cumbria

Nick reported that the next meeting was this Friday, and he would update afterwards. Jozi noted that there was still an issue with information being sent out very late, and so it was hard to engage with the wider sector on agenda items.

13. Cumbria LEP

No update available

14. Cumbria Compact

Conference was covered earlier, under actions from the previous meeting.

Jozi urged Executive members to contact her if they were aware of times when the Compact was not being followed – issues can only be followed up if she's made aware of them!

15. Cumbria Healthwatch

David circulated a poster summarising the work Cumbria Healthwatch was involved in. This includes:

- Morecambe Bay Improvement Board
- West Cumberland Hospital – met with community campaign, setting up Community Forum (and will be seeking third sector representation)
- North Cumbria Clinical Strategy – organising a series of engagements events for the Trust
- Cumbria Partnership Trust

Steve asked about the future of Best Life Wellbeing Network, as he had heard it was being recommissioned. David reported that it was now being commissioned by the CCG, and would no longer concentrate on mental health.

Will queried the process for selecting representatives for the West Cumbria Community Forum. Carolyn replied that this could not be finalised until more information was received,

but it seemed likely that the Action for Health Network would be best placed to select a representative.

ACTION 10: David to forward Terms of Reference when available

16. Key Issues form Specialist Networks

Jozi noted that the next Action for Health event was on 20 November, and Colin Cox and Richard Parry were due to attend. Action for Health is also about to review how it is represented on the Third Sector Executive.

17. Any other business

Andy noted that Northern Rock Foundation is now winding down. CVS and funders (including CCF) have a grant list and are assessing the impact on funded organisations.

18. Cumbria Digital Strategy Presentation

Nick Thomas and Vivien Willoughby gave a brief presentation on the Digital Strategy for Cumbria. This is about how services are offered to the public (and not about internal CCC IT).

The strategy focuses on using online solutions where possible (e.g. school admissions, library renewals), widening access (e.g. providing wifi in Cumbria Care homes) and getting more people on line. It is not intended that online services will completely replace face to face contact – it's about providing a different mix of services.

It is believed that 25% of people in Cumbria lack the basic skills to make use of online services. Nick emphasised that CCC couldn't reach all these people alone, and would need to work with other organisations including those in the third sector.

There was a recent Digital Champions event to give information about the strategy and learn about existing services. Helen reported that as a direct result of attending this event, Cumbria Methodist District had put in an application to EoN, and got a grant for a mobile service (laptops, PAYG dongle) to move around Cumbria developing online skills.

Discussion covered the following points:

- Online services can be wonderful (eg can buy tax disc at home in the evening), but don't work for everyone, particularly those who are functionally illiterate.
- Some people value being able to pick up the phone and talk to a human voice
- Will there be any financial support for people who'd like to get online but struggle to afford it – group buying schemes, etc?
- Cumbria still only has 17% coverage for superfast broadband (and still no broadband in some areas).
- In rural areas, village halls and church halls might be able to provide wifi access for those who don't have home wifi.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 13 January 2015 – 10.00 – 12.30, Penrith Rugby Club