

Westmorland and Furness Council Meeting 15.6.23.

Report by Michael Hanley.

Chair: M Severn (MS, LD)

1. Armed Forces Covenant

J Brook (JB, Leader): We promised to sign this covenant at the previous meeting. We are demonstrating to the Armed Forces that we care and they are valued members of our communities. We will consider the National Veterans Strategy. As chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board I will ensure consideration of the Armed Forces. I will make sure that we support the Armed Forces and veterans. As a unitary council, we can do a lot more than the previous district councils could. We will review all relevant policies. We will look to increase support for the Armed Forces, veterans and their families. We will look to help veterans to transfer to civilian life. We will have a WAFC Armed Forces Board. The previous covenant was agreed in 2013 and a lot of work has been done since then. We have worked with the NHS and Housing. I would like to thank Major Jennifer Henry for attending today.

Bill McEwan (BE, L): I welcome my selection on to this group. My grandson left school at 16 and joined the army but ended in a war zone. We were lucky that he came back. It's a great honour to be picked for this role.

V Hughes (VH, LD): I feel very honoured to serve in this role.

N Phillips (NP, C): I welcome the council's response to the Armed Forces (AF). The AF work in peace-keeping situations and shows a high degree of professionalism. This area has strong links with the AF. During the Covid pandemic, the AF were involved with the Nightingale Hospitals and vaccination. Many members find it a struggle to adapt to civilian life and we need to support them. We have cadet forces in our area. Great work goes on at Cadet Centres.

J Murray (JM, LD): Councillor Mike Eyles (ME, a veteran) had to give his apologies as he is undergoing surgery.

V Taylor (VT, LD): ME is a veteran and is looking forward to working in his role.

Vote: Unanimous in favour.

Major Henry: I would like to thank the Westmorland and Furness Council for their support. She talked about AF activity in the area including the fact that Warcop is training members of the Ukrainian army.

2. Announcements

JB: The WAFC will make significant investments in the area. £5 million will go into an investment fund which will be spent on local projects, funding local areas, biodiversity and transport. We are committed to make a real difference to our residents. There is an opportunity to do things differently. There is a scheme to transform the centre of Barrow. It will be worth £17 million. We hope to attract more people to the town centre. There will be thousands of extra jobs which will come from BAE and other industries in Barrow. I recently attended an event at the House of Lords and was able to speak about the programme for Barrow.

P Thornton (PT, LD): We had the first meeting of The Highways and Transport Board. One objective is to make it easier to allow communities to introduce 20mph limits. There will be a £300k fund to help communities with this change (signage, etc).

3. Minutes of Cabinet (governing group) Meeting

JB: Discussed the minutes of the 24th of April cabinet meeting. One item was concerning a smoke-free WAFC. The aim is to reduce tobacco dependence and reduce the prevalence (percentage of the population who smoke) to 5% (current UK average: 13% of adults smoke). £441k will be allocated to this. There will be pharmacy smoking cessation support.

A Burns (AB, L): Enquired about the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). I would like to congratulate JB on the recent funding for Barrow. The SPF replaces the European Structural Fund (EU). We would have got much more from Europe. Are you going to lobby the government to get a bigger pot of money.

JB: This funding is less and if there is an opportunity to lobby the government I will do that.

H Carrick (HC, C): The UK SPF does give us a unique opportunity. What would be the priorities?

JB: We have said that we wanted locality boards to take a full part. I am not sure if we have a mechanism in place at the moment.

HC: Will the investment in smoking cessation be a stand-alone or be in partnership with the ICB (NHS)?

P Bell (PB, LD): We will be working with the ICB (Integrated Care Board).

T Callister (TC, L): I would like to support the cabinet in supporting the Frenchfield Stadium (Penrith Football Club). Could we please support a similar one in the Furness area?

P Dew (PD, C): You alluded to the recent cabinet meeting on the 6th of June. Full council will not be able to scrutinise decisions made until the end of September.

JB: We are trying to make decisions quickly. We have to spend funds by the end of March 24. I could find out whether the cabinet papers could be published quicker so they are available to the next full council meeting.

L Jones (LJ, monitoring officer): We can look into this.

JB: We are looking that the scrutiny committees will be involved.

PD: Can I make another comment?

M. Severn (MS, Chair): I think we have discussed this enough and we need to move on.

M Brereton (MB, C): Asked about subsidies on transport.

LJ: This report is not before us. I will find the answer to your question.

PD: £300k has been set aside for 20mph zones. They will be sign only schemes. The Department of Transport has done research in this area. This measure will reduce speeds by 1 mph. Given the amount of money involved, is this a wise move?

CT: This is a response to communities. It will make it easier for communities to apply for the reduced speed limits. There needs to be support for parish and town councils if they want to apply. The policy hasn't been developed yet. In Wales, all the 30mph zones have become 20mph.

A Connell (AC, LD): Could this council adopt a similar motto to Barrow. I suggest "Mari Montibus" which means "From Sea to the Mountains".

MS: We will consider your suggestion.

H Irving (HI, C): At a recent council meeting, it was suggested that each councillor have a fund of £1000.

JB: As councillors we should be able to make changes in our local communities. I would like it to be more. Locality Boards may choose to increase the fund in the future.

TC: Thank you to Councillor Thornton. I very much support the 20mph limit. If this avoids a child being killed, we have to support it. £300k in saving lives, for goodness sake, is not a lot of money!

MS: Can we form questions, not remarks?

AB: Asked about vaping. She had seen children as young as 9 vaping. Will this money (smoking cessation) target these young children?

PB: It will target both adults and children.

L Hall (LH, C): We were asked for 20mph zones outside schools. Can we prioritise schools? Signage is not the answer. We have to have traffic calming measures as well.

PT: If we get a case of speeding outside a school, we will look into this. In the county council days it was very difficult to change speed limits. If your locality board thinks it is high priority, it will happen.

5. Holehird Trust

In 1945 the Holehird Estate was gifted to Westmorland County Council. It comprises of land and property around Troutbeck. It includes a large Victorian mansion, which was a Leonard Cheshire residential home from 1960-2022. There are also formal gardens, farms, cottages and barns. Income is used to maintain the estate. Surplus income goes to grants to community groups.

JB: This is an important trust. It is important that we administer it in line with the intention of the gift

(provide housing to people in need due to age, disability and advance education.).

W.Clark (WC, LD): I look forward to working on this committee. This trust provides grants to voluntary organisations. I am pleased that it gives priority to children and the elderly. In the past the fund has provided funds in the region of £250k.

6. Public Participation Scheme for WAFC.

P Dixon (PD, LD): This scheme will improve governance. We appreciate it when the public share their concerns and desires.

V Taylor (VT, LD): Public participation is extremely important.

7. Appointments to the Lake District National Park Authority.

Councillor Endsor had resigned and Cllr N Hughes was nominated in his place.

Vote: Unanimous in favour.

Next meeting: Thursday 21.9.23.