Portfolio: Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio
Report from: Cllr Robin Ashcroft

Portfolio Responsibilities

The Council Plan objectives as they relate to the Portfolio area of work, and cross-cutting work developed through the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy, promoting Culture leisure activities and the arts and developing strategy for cultural assets.

Working in partnership to ensure a thriving and prosperous District within the context of the wider sub-region, through effective economic development, regeneration and transport strategies.

Working in partnership to ensure thriving and prosperous town centres throughout the District.

Providing public realm infrastructure to promote the local economy.

Promoting small businesses in both towns and rural areas

The Council plan objectives in relation to promoting culture, leisure activities and the arts.

To work with our cultural organisations to attract investment and to promote South Lakeland as a premier area for Arts and Events.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

- Economic Development Strategy
- Arts and Events
- Grants Strategy
- Licensing and Statement of Gambling Policies

Key Areas:

- Economic Inward Investment
- Business Support and Sector Development
- Visitor Economy
- Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation Strategies
- Markets
• Arts and Culture
• Grants
• Public Halls
• Use of community assets for the promotion of arts and culture
• Heritage and Events
• Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment
• Voluntary Sector Engagement in relation to Culture and Leisure
• Leisure and Recreation
• Licensing and Gambling
• Cross Authority Economic initiatives

**Economic Inward Investment**

Following a full application from SLDC and the Environment Agency, ERDF funding of £5.34m was secured in March 2019 for Kendal flood alleviation measures. This overall cost of the Kendal phase is £16.1m. Planning permission was granted in June 2019 for the Kendal phase of the scheme, which is expected to be delivered in reaches by March 2022. Phase 2 of scheme will be Flood Risk Management at Burnside, Ings and Staveley, with Phase 3 upland storage continuing to be developed. Total cost of scheme is £45m.

A £2.35m Coastal Communities Fund bid has been successful; £1m of the ‘Experience Morecambe Bay’ scheme will be put towards Grange-over-Sands Lido and Promenade enhancements, with the further £1.35m delivering an extension of Morecambe Bay Cycleway, an extension to the Bay Cycleway electric bike network and a number of smaller scale projects around the bay led and delivered by Morecambe Bay Partnership.

An Expression of Interest for the Future High Streets Fund has been submitted and, if successful, would see potentially millions of pounds of investment made available for Kendal town centre. The Council is awaiting a response from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government as to whether this has been successful in being invited to Stage 2 of the application process. This is just one of several town centre funding opportunities on the horizon and the Council remains alert to these, working with partners and making submissions where appropriate, as they arise.

Intelligence has been gathered and conversations are ongoing with broadband delivery partners to ensure South Lakeland communities are digitally connected. The Council also continues to engage with Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership on the development of the Cumbria Local Industrial Strategy, which has now progressed to central government through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for further refinement.

The Economic Development Team continue to have a dialogue with landowners, agents and potential developers to bring forward allocated employment sites in the South Lakeland Local Plan. Follow up conversations are being had with respondents to the 2018 Business Survey who indicated a wish to expand their business.
Business Support and Sector Development

The Council has continued participation in economic partnerships, including the Lake District National Park Business Task Force, Furness Economic Development Forum, Kendal BID and Ulverston BID, Kendal Futures, Bowness and Windermere Forward and Sedbergh Economic Partnership among others. SLDC has also built on its working relationships with strategic partners such as Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumbria Local Enterprise EP, attending a number of newly formed business sector panels.

Research provided by Cumbria Tourism in this period has revealed that tourism had a £1.3bn economic impact on South Lakeland last year, up 5.6% on 2017. The latest figures show that South Lakeland’s contribution is by far the highest share of any of Cumbria’s districts, representing 44% of its total tourism revenue.

Following the success of the previous three year scheme, SLDC has agreed to partner with the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, funding Business Support for 2019/20. This means that businesses in South Lakeland of any size, sector and stage in life, including pre-start up, will have access to business advice at no cost to them.

The Council-run MintWorks continues to be a much valued business centre, operating at close to full occupancy and with its conference and meeting room facilities in regular use. Its success is inspiring consideration of similar hubs in South Lakeland, the next of which is planned for the renovation of South Lakeland House and Kendal Town Hall.

Visitor Economy

SLDC along with other local authorities provide support towards the research undertaken by STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) to measure the volume and value of tourism across Cumbria to inform tourism policy and development. The latest figures show that South Lakeland’s contribution is by far the highest share of any of Cumbria’s districts, with the district’s £1.3 billion representing 44% of the county’s total tourism revenue of £3 billion. The tourism sector supports 16,177 full-time jobs in South Lakeland, which is almost half of all the tourism-related jobs in Cumbria. The Council will use this data to progress the Council Plan targets and support communities to thrive commercially.

Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation Strategies

The Kendal Town Centre Strategy is nearing completion in preparation for key stakeholder consultation events to take place. The strategy will set out a clear vision for Kendal 2025 and incorporates findings from the Car Parking Study and Kendal Strategic Transport Study.

The Council have undertaken a car parking study of Kendal to understand where publicly available visitors, shoppers, workers and public transport car parking is under stress. The study identifies how those stresses are likely to change over time, how council car parks and other publicly owned car parks and on street car parking can be most effectively managed to maximise town centre viability and visitor spend; and to quantify the need for additional parking spaces in the context of effective parking and traffic management. This report is currently in draft and will be released in due course.
Markets

Earlier in 2019 it was agreed at Cabinet to explore the potential for an innovative and experienced operator to manage Kendal’s indoor and outdoor markets as part of a two stage procurement process.

As part of Stage 1 the Council will be investigating what interest there is in the private sector to take on the running of Kendal markets, whether that be running the markets as one or as two separate markets, understanding the financial implications this would have on our revenue budget, understanding the economic benefits that a new operator could bring to the town and investigating what social value could be added through a different operating model for the markets.

Arts and Culture

The Council works closely with strategic cultural partners to encourage, support and promote cultural arts and events across the district. Close partnership working with Arts Council England and other cultural organisations funding has been secured to facilitate significant initiatives to promote South Lakeland as a leading cultural destination and premier rural area for arts, events and festivals supporting cultural landscapes.

Throughout 2019/20 the Council will be continuing to develop and implement the Great Places project to develop sustainable, resilient and creative communities which will retain and attract young people to South Lakeland and Craven districts.

This year the Council will be working with cultural partners to support the upcoming leading cultural events such as Kendal Mountain Festival, Comic Arts Festival, Lakes Alive and the Tour of Britain.

Grants

As agreed at Cabinet on 6 February 2019 the council will review grant commitments year on year to strategic cultural partners. These agreed strategic cultural partners demonstrate a high importance to the districts cultural offer.

Public Halls and use of community assets for the promotion of arts and culture

The Council has been and will continue to support cultural and local events for communities through its assets. The use of public halls supports areas across the council plan such as health and wellbeing and economy. Just some examples of the events held in SLDC halls include:

- Weekly coffee mornings
- Wedding Ceremonies
- Fitness Classes
- Language Classes
- Financial support through the Eden and South Lakes Credit Union
- Theatre performances
- Magistrates and Civil Courts
Heritage, Events and Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment

The Burton in Kendal Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) is a three year programme which aims follows a programme of improvements to building throughout the village to preserve the heritage and stop the loss of important architectural detail.

The tender process is soon to commence for the £100k public realm improvements for the square in the centre of the village.

A community design workshop has been held in the village with stakeholders recently of which the feedback will form part of the process to adopting a Village Design Statement as a supplementary planning document.

The Council has recently given a grant to Cartmel Village Society to enable them to undertake a Conservation Area Management Plan. The aim is for this to use this plan as a supplementary planning document which will be used to inform the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans for Lower Allithwaite parish.

Leisure and Recreation

The Council will be continuing to work in partnership with GLL to provide local leisure opportunities for communities at locations in Kendal, Ulverston and Windermere.

A feasibility study is underway in relation to Ulverston leisure Centre. The Council will be continuing to liaise with user groups and GSK regarding future proposals. Once the feasibility study has been completed a formal consultation period will be held with user groups and the Town Council and once this has been concluded a report will be considered at Cabinet to formally agree the facilities mix.

Licensing and Gambling

The Licensing service has been undertaking a number of improvements which support the customer connect project, council plan priorities and e-learning packages for members and committee training.

The licensing service is currently undergoing a service redesign as part of customer connect to improve the customer journey when applying or renewing a license.

Cross Authority Economic initiatives

Since 2017 Barrow Borough Council, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council has worked together to work together to build on their collective strengthens in the Lancaster and South Cumbria economic region.

A launch event for the initiative was held on 14 June at Lancaster University where an audience of around 100 representatives from businesses across the Morecambe Bay footprint attended to seek further information on the initiative and understand how they can become involved and shape the project initiative. 96% of the businesses that attended have a workforce that both live and work across the Bay footprint.
The prospectus which is available online, highlights the Bay area as being a beautiful and safe place to live, encompassing the Lake District and the many protected coastal attractions of Morecambe Bay, with city-like benefits of good national transport links, leading universities, world-class restaurants and theatres, all with the bonus of having the room for thriving businesses to grow.

The three councils will now be focusing on building their collective strengths through energy, advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, life sciences, health innovation, higher education and the visitor economy, to create a nationally and internationally significant economy by encouraging public and private sector investment, building aspiration and growing local skills to create opportunities which deliver improved productivity, prosperity and inclusive growth for the Northern Powerhouse. The three councils have confirmed their commitment to supporting the private sector and have been encouraged to liaise with the three councils about what they need from the initiative which will support the firming up of future plans. A study will be undertaken which will see the development of an Investment Plan for the region going forward.