

Item No.18

COUNCIL – 27 July 2021

ITEM NO.18 – Leader’s Announcements and Cabinet Question Time, Including the Composite Report of the Cabinet (1 Hour Maximum)

Written Responses to Questions

From:	Cllr Pat Bell
To:	Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder
	<p>“Recovering from Covid19 it is essential that business enterprise in Kendal is encouraged for the wellbeing of both resident and visitor economy, alongside our cultural and leisure offering. Can Cllr Ashcroft clarify what involvement SLDC has in the sale of the top floor of the Westmorland Shopping Centre to Kendal College for, I believe, approximately 3 million pounds and does he think that this is the best way to encourage the re starting of our high street when there is, I understand, empty available building space much nearer to their Milnthorpe Road campus?”</p>
Response	<p><i>The Council understands that Kendal College has aspirations to increase its learning space in Kendal, given the increasing uptake in numbers enrolling with them. The College is an incredible asset to the area, playing an increasingly important role in skills provision and youth retention, and we welcome these aspirations. We understand that the College is investigating viable options and that, due to the size requirement, the Westmorland Shopping Centre is one of these being considered.</i></p> <p><i>The Westmorland Shopping Centre currently has a high proportion of empty units due to challenging market forces, particularly around retail, accelerated by the impacts of Covid-19. We feel that it is vital for the future vibrancy of our town centres that underused retail space can be repurposed to provide a greater mix of uses, including education, leisure, food and drink, entertainment, health and services.</i></p> <p><i>Any options taken forward will be the subject of independent commercial decisions which we must respect, but the Council is supportive in the general sense of any proposals which would increase the College’s town centre presence and the footfall this would generate, supporting the surrounding businesses and services.</i></p>
From:	Cllr David Webster
To:	Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder
	<p>“With the 5 year lease of the Coronation Hall, Ulverston, to Ulverston Community Enterprise (UCE) now ended and due to Covid 19 this lease being allowed to continue until a new one can be agreed between this Council and UCE can you please update me with how negotiations are progressing and the timescale you have set for its completion. As you are aware the Coronation Hall is seen by a large proportion of Ulverston residents to be the cultural and social hub of the town and its continued closure is not helping with the reopening of the town centre. I am also aware that the only way for premises of this nature to obtain the major grants that are required to run and maintain the Arts, Theatre and community events is through a long lease and I hope that this is what is being progressed by this Council.</p> <p>I am aware that due to the nature of lease negotiations there may be items that are confidential and still to be agreed so I am willing to accept a written reply to this question.”</p>
Response	<p><i>Discussions have been ongoing with UCE for the last 18-24 months to agree a longer term lease. UCE have also been working on a long term business plan, investment strategy and working with several funders to look at development of the both Ulverston</i></p>

	<p><i>Coronation Hall and Ulverston Market. Unfortunately due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this has hampered the completion of any business plan and with no long term lease in place, it has limited the ability to secure large Capital grants. Discussions to date has led to the acceptance that a short term extension for a further two years is needed to give the UCE sufficient time to complete their business and investment plans following the pandemic. The UCE and SLDC are keen to ensure that the option for a further two year extension allows them to enter into long term agreements before expiry of the two years if sufficient progress allows. As part of the short term extension, no grant support will be given, however, SLDC will support with reactive maintenance for the next two years. It is estimated that this is in the region of £12k per annum and will be delivered by the new in-house mtce team.</i></p> <p><i>In addition to the short term extension to the existing lease, it is proposed that approval in principle be given for a long term lease to be entered into for the Coronation Hall and Markets following completion of a robust and suitable business plan. Officers will bring back to Cabinet a report for further consideration and approval for a long term option. We are awaiting their full business case which may take circa 6-12 months when looking at the Covid recovery and being able to plan in such an uncertain time.</i></p> <p><i>With respect to the additional question Cllr Webster raised in the meeting with regard to Ulverston leisure, a separate response will follow.</i></p>
From:	Cllr Mark Wilson
To:	Cllr Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder
	<p><i>“Given the position regarding LRG would the Leader agree to an all party group being set up to examine how we go forward as we establish work streams that will meet the needs of the residents in this and the other partner Districts? The time scale is tight and we have no experience of running the range of services that CCC operate.”</i></p>
Response	<p><i>As I indicated in my introductory comments to the LGR paper on Council’s agenda papers, LGR is clearly a significant issue that will affect us all.</i></p> <p><i>We have already had several conversations across the three authorities of Eden, South Lakeland and Barrow and Cumbria County Council and we are committed to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for our residents. Regular meetings will be established and I know that the Chief Executives from all the Cumbrian Authorities, have already established weekly meetings to take this matter forward.</i></p> <p><i>As an authority, we will also seek to keep members from across all parties both informed and involved. It is too early in the process to say exactly how this will be achieved, but this is our intention and it is in our organisational DNA to work collaboratively across boundaries, so we are well placed to deliver on our aspirations.</i></p> <p><i>I would not like to commit to a specific course of action at this early stage of the process. You are correct in identifying the tight timescales that are attached to this process. So we will be coming forward with a planned course of action to take us through the transition process in the near future and this will include the opportunity for all members from all parties to be involved in the process and to share their knowledge and experiences in order to help us achieve the best outcomes for our residents.</i></p>

From:	Cllr Mark Wilson
To:	Cllr Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder
	<p>“With regard to the LRG decision would the Leader be minded to look favourably upon assisting the setting up a number of Task and Finish groups? These would be focussed on community service provision that Overview and Scrutiny might start work immediately in establishing ways in which current SLDC services and policies are extended to provide assurance to all service users that a seamless transition will be arrived at by 2023.”</p>
Response	<p>It is for the O&S Committee to determine their own work programme and priorities having regard to the timescales, advice and resources they have at their disposal. Having regard to the experience of other Councils that have gone through this process, there are some structures that will emerge that will take forward much of the work required to deliver the goal of a seamless transition you rightly identify as a key priority. For example, Joint Committees and Shadow Authorities will be established and these will be the primary places where questions will be asked and decisions made, certainly up until vesting day in April 2023.</p> <p>These will be important groups, that will most likely be formed from existing Leaders until next year’s elections, then the Shadow Board will take over until vesting day. At that point the Shadow Board will become the new authority’s leadership team.</p> <p>What will be key, will be ensuring that resources are focussed where they deliver the best outcomes and that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort.</p> <p>I’m sure we all share the desire for achieving the most positive outcomes from this process, So I look forward to working with officers and member colleagues from across all parties to achieve this outcome.</p> <p>As in my answer to the previous question, I would not like to commit to a specific course of action at this early stage of the process. But be assured, we will be coming forward with a planned course of action to take us through the transition process in the near future and this will include the opportunity for all members from all parties to be involved in the process and to share their knowledge and experiences in order to help us achieve the best outcomes for our residents.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank