

SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings at a virtual meeting of the Council held on Tuesday, 6 October 2020, at 6.30 p.m.

Present

Councillors

Stephen Coleman (Chairman)
Pete McSweeney (Vice-Chairman)

Caroline Airey	Gill Gardner	Susanne Long
James Airey	Tom Harvey	Ian Mitchell
Giles Archibald	Eamonn Hennessy	Jon Owen
Robin Ashcroft	Hazel Hodgson	Suzie Pye
Rupert Audland	Rachael Hogg	Doug Rathbone
Ben Berry	John Holmes	Brian Rendell
Roger Bingham	Kevin Holmes	Matt Severn
Jonathan Brook	Vicky Hughes	Peter Thornton
Helen Chaffey	Helen Irving	David Webster
Brian Cooper	Andrew Jarvis	Ian Wharton
Michael Cornah	Janette Jenkinson	Janet Willis
Tracy Coward	Dyan Jones	Mark Wilson
Philip Dixon	Helen Ladhams	Shirley-Anne Wilson
Judy Filmore	Malcolm Lamb	
Alvin Finch	Kevin Lancaster	

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pat Bell, Chris Hogg and Dave Khan.

Officers

Inge Booth	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
Lawrence Conway	Chief Executive
Linda Fisher	Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)
Richard Machin	Communications Specialist
Simon McVey	Operational Lead Support Services
Claire Read	Finance Specialist
Helen Smith	Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer)
David Sykes	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources

C/40

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Following confirmation that the live stream of the meeting had commenced, the Chairman welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. He referred to the new Government legislation allowing councils to conduct remote meetings and explained in detail to all taking part, and for the benefit of members of the public observing, the procedures for the meeting. The Chairman then asked the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) to carry out a roll call, during which all Members present indicated by which means they were taking part and confirmed that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the

meeting. The Chairman referred to officers present who would introduce themselves when asked to address the meeting. In addition, the Chairman took the opportunity to advise Members that he proposed to take Agenda Item No.16 – Notices of Motion - immediately following Agenda Item No.10 – Annual Procurement Update 2019/20.

C/41 MINUTES

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 July 2020.

C/42 EMERGENCY NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Whilst the need for decisions to be taken in a timely manner during the Covid-19 pandemic was accepted, assurance was sought with regard to the re-introduction of meetings of the Lake Administration Committee. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) explained that business was now being transacted through virtual meetings and that a meeting of the Lake Administration Committee had successfully taken place on 2 October 2020. Both she and Councillor Doug Rathbone, Chairman of the Lake Administration Committee further explained that both of the emergency decisions relating to encroachments on Lake Windermere had been taken in consultation with the Chairman, thereby maintaining a close link to the Committee.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That

(1) the following Emergency Non-Executive Decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with Part 3 of the Council's Constitution 3.(B 1) (1.1) be received:-

- (a) 013 02-09-20 Installation of a New Traditional Wooden Jetty to High Cunsey Farm, Windermere;
- (b) 014 02-09-20 Encroachment Application to Install a New Wooden Jetty and Three Mooring Posts at Townhead, Windermere; and
- (b) 015 02-09-20 HR Flexible Retirement 04-2020; and

(2) any spending outside any budgetary provision be noted.

C/43 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

M/s Jemima Longcake was connected to the meeting and introduced by the Chairman.

M/s Longcake, speaking as a representative for the Children's Society, addressed Council with regard to Agenda Item No.16 – Notices of Motion – and Councillor Suzie Pye's Notice of Motion on Poverty.

She explained that she was leading on the Cumbria Children's Society Branch 'Strengthening the Safety Net' campaign, engaging in discussions with local councils to analyse the resources available for families in crisis and support in improving these where necessary. She informed Council that she had been invited to speak at this

meeting on the back of discussions with some Council Members who had assisted her to get a better picture of the resources available in South Lakeland. M/s Longcake was keen to continue in these discussions and to support the Council wherever possible. Despite the County as a whole not having an officially recognised crisis support scheme according to The Children's Society's records, M/s Longcake pointed out that there were a number of well-designed systems to offer support to those who needed it most. The proposal to declare a poverty emergency was one that The Children's Society fully supported if the steps were taken to effectively create systems that prevented any family, child, or individual from falling through the net in a time of crisis.

M/s Longcake said that the Society's data showed that 27% of children were living in poverty in the wider County. On a basic level, The Children's Society defined this as being unable to afford the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. This could mean that they and their families were left struggling to pay rent, pay for school supplies, or to put food on the table. Despite this, the only borough to have declared a poverty emergency so far had been Barrow. For South Lakeland District Council to declare its own would, M/s Longcake believed, be an immeasurably positive step, if actions followed through. The Children's Society defined ideal poverty support as something that 'CARES'. That was that it focussed on being child-friendly and accessible to all, as well as referral friendly, eligibility aware, and strategic in its leadership, meaning that councils should be responsible, and held accountable for taking care of their constituents in a way that fulfilled the aforementioned needs.

M/s Longcake had one question, which was what would this declaration mean in terms of the area's response to poverty?

The Chairman thanked M/s Longcake for her contribution and explained that, once disconnected from the meeting, she was welcome to listen to the debate on the motion via the live stream of the event.

C/44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) referred to her recent briefing note to Members on interests with regards to Agenda Item No.8 - Local Government Reform and Devolution. She explained to Members that a dispensation has been granted to all Members with regard to allowances in respect of matters relating to Local Government Reform and Devolution for a period of four years.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) informed Council that, for Agenda Items Nos.8 and 17 – A590 Cross-a-Moor Junction Improvement, councillors who were dual-hatted, i.e. District Councillors and County Councillors, would have an Other Registrable Interest under the Code of Conduct. Following the advice in the note circulated, the other registrable interest would be recorded and, unless any Member considered themselves to be biased or predetermined, they could speak and vote on both items.

Members having been asked, no other declarations of interest were raised in respect of any of the items on this Agenda.

C/45 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That the item in Part II of the Agenda be dealt with following the exclusion of the press and public.

C/46 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman drew attention to his list of formal engagements which was attached to the Agenda.

C/47 SIZE OF AND SEATS TO BE ALLOCATED TO POLITICAL GROUPS ON COMMITTEES

Further to C/27 (2019/20) and following recent resignations from the Council, the Legal Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented a report seeking Council's agreement on the size of and seats to be allocated to Political Groups on Committees, based on the Council's current Membership of 48. In addition, she sought agreement that there would be no changes to current Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) informed Council that a review had been carried out in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and that meetings had taken place with the Group Leaders and Councillor Judy Filmore, Green Party Member, the proposed allocation attached to the report having been informally agreed. Subject to approval of the recommendations, all Group Leaders had agreed to notify the Monitoring Officer of the required changes in committee membership.

Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, moved the recommendations contained within the report, thanking officers involved in this complex matter and to the other Group Leaders and Councillor Judy Filmore for their willingness to engage. He was seconded by Councillor Tom Harvey, Leader of the Conservative Group, who agreed with Councillor Archibald that this had resulted in a fair and equitable outcome.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That

(1) the size of and seats to be allocated to the political groups on committees be approved as set out below:-

Committees subject to political balance

	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Labour	Green Party Member
Committees (64 places)	40	9	4	
Audit (6)	4	2	0	0
Human Resources (9)	5	3	1	0
Licensing Regulatory (15)	10	4	1	0
Overview and Scrutiny (13)	8	4	1	0
Planning (14)	8	4	1	1
Standards (7)	4	2	1	0

Committees not subject to political balance

	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Labour	Green Party Member
Committees (31 places)	20	9	2	
Lake Administration (24 Members in total 16 District Councillors)	10	5	1	0
Licensing (15)	10	4	1	0

(2) the number of seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be increased from 12 to 13 and the number of seats on the Audit Committee be reduced from 7 to 6;

(3) the required amendments to the Constitution be delegated to the Monitoring Officer; and

(4) the Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of Council and Committees remain unchanged.

C/48**EXPLORATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM AND DEVOLUTION**

Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, presented a report, explaining that in anticipation that Government might call for proposals for the reorganisation of local government, it was being proposed that the Council worked jointly with Barrow Borough and Lancaster City councils to explore further evidence to substantiate a case for the area of the three districts to form a Unitary Authority. The report indicated that the development of a high level case would be an initial step, enabling the three councils to explore and describe the benefits of a cross county boundary proposal, based squarely on the functioning economic geography and health footprint of the Morecambe Bay area. It would enable the councils to present an option to Government, demonstrating how a unitary council would be an effective driver of economic, social and environmental benefits for the area's residents, businesses and visitors, realise the strategic potential of the area and enable transformation of public services.

In moving the recommendations contained within the report, Councillor Archibald informed Members that, a number of months previously, he had been called to a meeting with the then Minister Jake Berry and other leaders in Cumbria to discuss possible devolution and the reorganisation that would be required in order to achieve a devolution deal. Councillor Archibald explained the current situation, several meetings later.

The Government had indicated that it would publish a White Paper, probably in the New Year, which would lay out the conditions for reorganisation and devolution. The Government had made it clear that, if an area had general and strong agreement to a reorganisation structure, it could request permission to move ahead prior to the publication of the White Paper. In technical detail, the Council had to ask for the Secretary of State to send to it a letter asking it to submit a high-level case. That letter had gone in from the County Council asking for that permission to submit a case. The County Council Cabinet had decided to submit a bid for a unitary Cumbria. Given this decision and preliminary indications from Government, the districts in Cumbria had been developing their ideas as to alternative unitary structures. There was no agreement among the districts and Councillor Archibald felt that, if bids were requested today, there could be at least four different unitary structures submitted.

It was Councillor Archibald's own view that this was not a good time to be discussing reorganisation. He believed that focus should be on the current Covid-19 crisis and that the Council should be putting all its spare resources into assisting businesses and its most vulnerable residents. This discussion about re-organisation was both distracting and somewhat divisive. It was also not good timing as it was not yet known what would be in the White Paper, nor the Government's plan for adult social care. In addition, the Council lacked detail on what devolution might mean for it. It had to be recognised, though, that the Government might push towards reorganisation, in which case the Council needed to be ready with what it felt best for its community. To this end, Councillor Archibald was asking Members to approve the recommendations contained in the report to enable the Council to explore the option of a Morecambe Bay unitary authority, to explore the appropriateness of reorganisation for the Council and to develop a high level case which could be submitted in the case that a proposed bid was sought.

Councillor Archibald did not believe that a unitary Cumbria was optimal for residents. He informed Members that there were many independent studies which showed that the larger the local authority, the less engagement there was of the electorate; less trust in the councillors; and reduction in voter turnout. Carlisle was remote from South Lakeland. Councillor Archibald pointed out that Cumbria was an artificial invention, drawing attention to the LA postcode. He also pointed out that the people of Barrow identified more with Lancaster than with Whitehaven. Councillor Archibald said that independent research showed no conclusive evidence of savings or increased efficiency through a larger council size.

Councillor Archibald believed that, if there was to be a reorganisation, then residents should be given the chance to consider a Morecambe Bay footprint for a unitary authority. The Bay was a functioning economic area, shared a health trust and had an affinity around the Bay. The three authorities had found an incredible consistency in approach to local government and worked well together, also sharing history and geography.

These recommendations, to explore the concept of a Morecambe Bay unitary and to develop a high level business case, had already been agreed by Barrow and Lancaster councils. Councillor Archibald pointed out that, if agreed, a communications programme could be agreed with Barrow and Lancaster which would include extensive use of social media, involve a connecting with the parishes, engage businesses, and would include a special informal discussion with councillors later in the month. A special meeting would then be held for Council to approve the detail of the high level case to be presented to Government. Councillor Archibald believed this approach to be prudent and in the best interest of residents.

Councillor Jonathan Brook, Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder, seconded the motion.

Debate commenced on the motion, with attention being drawn to 2004 and a proposal at that time for Barrow, Lancaster and South Lakeland being the Council's preferred option in response to a Government consultation at that time on Unitary Local Government. That had not happened and, since that time, there had been differences between the seven councils in Cumbria over its future government. It was suggested that councillors were not only loyal to their communities, but also to their organisations. The need for fact gathering on the Morecambe Bay solution was raised. Councillor Archibald's concerns regarding timing were echoed, and the Government's current capacity to deal with devolution at the same time as Covid-19, Brexit and social care was questioned.

Councillor Tom Harvey, Leader of the Opposition Group, informed Council that his Group was broadly in support of the recommendations, however, proposed an amendment, which he hoped could be taken on board, by changing Recommendation (2) to (2)(a) and adding (2)(b), to read as follows:-

“To continue to engage with Cumbria County Council and the other Cumbrian district councils on other potential options to ensure South Lakeland residents get the best available benefits from any local government reorganisation.”

Councillor Archibald explained that he was unable to take on board the amendment as written, as he felt it was clear that there was engagement. He stressed that, although other district councils were developing other potential options, South Lakeland was not. Other options would emerge, but South Lakeland was focussing on the Morecambe Bay option. However, Councillor Archibald gave his assurance that there would be continued dialogue with the County and other districts with whom he met and talked on a regular basis.

Councillor Harvey at this stage having become temporarily disconnected from the meeting, Councillor Ben Berry suggested that Councillor Harvey would wish to pursue the amendment or ask Councillor Archibald to record his commitment for continued dialogue with the County and other districts to understand their thoughts and options.

Councillor Archibald, however, although happy to reiterate this commitment both verbally and in writing, wished to proceed with the motion as it stood. He offered, though, to engage with the Group Leaders and Members on a regular basis.

Councillor Harvey, having reconnected to the meeting following a short adjournment to resolve his technical issues, explained that he had understood the essence of Councillor Archibald's response. Councillor Harvey informed Council that his Group believed that local government reform and devolution needed to progress. Members had listened to the Morecambe Bay option, which his Group agreed was one of the options which should be explored. Also welcomed was the fact that there was, to some extent, consensus of opinion that the layers of local government in Cumbria required some level of reform, although Councillor Harvey appreciated that there were disagreements regarding the timing. Councillor Harvey had heard the concerns raised regarding the speed in which the matter was being pursued by the Government and, he said, with the publication of the White Paper being something of a moveable feast, this was not ideal. Councillor Harvey believed that everyone appreciated that seven principal councils and all that entailed could not be justified for a little over 0.5m people. Despite different views, Councillor Harvey stressed the need to take politics out of the equation and to push for reform that resulted in better outcomes for residents. Councillor Harvey reiterated that the amendment supported the proposals but added the need not to preclude other options.

Councillor James Airey seconded Councillor Harvey's proposed amendment. Councillor Airey suggested that there would never be a good time for local government reorganisation and devolution, however, felt that it needed to progress. He believed that the amendment allowed flexibility to look at all options and consultation with the residents of South Lakeland. He pointed out that the potential for cross county border options would not be even be known until the White Paper was published. He further pointed out that devolution was not about saving jobs but about new ways of delivering top quality public services and making savings to put into front line services. Councillor Airey referred to the independent studies mentioned by Councillor Archibald which had shown that there was no evidence of single unitaries making huge savings.

Councillor Airey referred to research carried out five years previously by Ernst Young for Cumbria County Council which had demonstrated savings as a result of a unitary authority of potentially £35m annually. He pointed out that the headquarters of a Cumbria unitary would not necessarily have to be based in Carlisle. He also drew attention to services such as social care and education and to the fact that district councils did not have expertise in these important fields, adding that the provision of education through a trust would be a retrograde step.

Debate took place on the proposed amendment. Raised was the importance of exploring the Morecambe Bay option further prior to taking a particular line. It was also suggested that residents should be involved through their local representatives and that there should be representation from all political parties in discussions moving forward. Some support was raised for the amendment, despite some wishing to see the Bay option come about.

Some Members felt the amendment to be unnecessary, saying that the proposals as they stood will allow for further discussion and consultation moving forward. Councillor Archibald's proposals did not seek to close options down and he had demonstrated commitment for continued dialogue. The paper proposed exploration of a particular option but was not committing to it. The option seemed currently to be the most natural combination. It was pointed out that the County Council had made its own proposal without involvement of the districts and there was currently no realistic grouping of councils otherwise.

Councillor Archibald responded to a remark by Councillor Airey, explaining that the research to which he had referred had been independent whilst Cumbria County Council's had not. With regard to adult social care, Councillor Archibald informed Members that authorities existed similar in size to Morecambe Bay that had responsibility for this and that they had done well. There would not necessarily be recourse to a social trust and, in addition, having social care on the same footprint as the health trust had potential advantages. Councillor Archibald said that, as the high level case was developed, he would be willing to engage with and hold regular meetings with Group Leaders to discuss the matter. Councillor Archibald believed that the proposed amendment would dilute focus which needed to be on developing the high level case for Morecambe Bay. He also informed Members that he met regularly with the other Cumbrian district and County Council leaders, with the devolution topic often raised. Councillor Archibald reiterated that he was happy to make commitments outside of the motion on the lines described and asked Council not to accept the amendment.

In response to a Point of Order raised by Councillor Brook, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) explained that Council would be voting on the proposed amendment which, she clarified, was the whole of the original motion but with the additional paragraph as put forward by Councillor Harvey and set out above. She further explained rules of procedure should the amendment be carried or lost.

The amendment was lost following a vote by roll call, and discussion returned to the substantive motion.

A number of questions were raised, including: How would this result in better outcomes for residents? How would there be improved democratic accountability? How would this make efficiencies? How would this work for all of Cumbria and Lancashire? It was pointed out that there were a lot of parishes in South Lakeland, unlike Barrow and Lancaster, and questioned as to how and whether they would be able to take on the roles placed on them by a unitary council.

A number of comments were raised. Attention was drawn to complications due to the mixed demography of Cumbria, although it was pointed out that the Arnsdale and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty crossed the frontier between South Lakeland and Lancaster. Members represented residents and concern was expressed at the potential for South Lakeland to join with two large urban areas, bearing in mind the Council's existing good relationship with parishes and local area partnerships. The need to ensure that this good relationship was maintained and the importance for residents knowing that they would still have their voice was raised. It was pointed out that, if a Morecambe Bay unitary came to fruition, this would result in two police and crime commissioners trying to attract resources from the new council. The need not to close the door on other options was stressed and it was acknowledged that Councillor Archibald had provided reassurance in this regard. It was reiterated that the timing was not good with the current pandemic and with resources already stretched to capacity, particularly bearing in mind the huge amount of work required for reform. It was also pointed out, however, that the Council having already risen to the challenge of significant reorganisation as a result of Covid-19, and having thus proved that it could change quickly, would be able to do this again. It was questioned as to why dual-hatted Members who had already voted for a Unitary Cumbria were also expressing support for this motion.

Members on the whole expressed support for the motion and the importance of providing a mandate to the Leader and officers to work out best possible deal for residents of South Lakeland was stressed. Unitary authorities caused less confusion to residents as regards delivery of services. A Morecambe Bay Unitary already existed culturally, economically and educationally. It was pointed out that South Lakeland's health infrastructure was already dictated by this footprint. In addition, the Community Safety Partnership had a good working relationship with Barrow Borough Council. Furthermore, cross-council talks were already happening with Barrow and Lancaster around both climate emergency and alleviation of poverty. Bigger unitary authorities were not necessarily best and were less agile. It was felt that making larger authorities would not improve local democracy, which was important as it enabled listening, understanding and analysis to find solutions to keep the economy moving forward and was key in informing place-making that enabled businesses to thrive. It was pointed out that it was, in fact, appropriate for dual-hatted Members to support both the County Council and District Council proposals for fact finding which would enable them to come to a decision when the final cases were presented. The need for Members to be well informed and, in addition, to understand the difference between unitary and combined authorities, was stressed.

Councillor Brook, as seconder, reiterated that there would be opportunity for consultation and discussion with communities and other authorities as the process moved forward. Councillor Brook said that there was nothing wrong with a drive for increased efficiency. He pointed out that South Lakeland had an excellent track record of innovative approaches to cost reduction and enhanced service delivery through initiatives such as its Customer Connect Programme. In addition, South Lakeland's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had shown it to be one of the most efficient and effective councils in the North West. The Council was, therefore, prepared to rise to any challenge that the Government may throw its way in terms of local government reform and devolution and, although it was felt that now was not a good time to be looking at alternative structures for the delivery of local government services, the Council would respond in a diligent and appropriate manner. Councillor Brook pointed out that this proposal recognised the reality that the Bay area was an integrated economic area, and had been for many years. There were strong historical, community and business links across the area and it mirrored the footprint for the delivery of health

services. The individual local authorities around the Bay could build on this reality, to achieve more by working together on economic prosperity and delivering services than by acting individually. South Lakeland's residents were at the heart of everything the Council did, and it was felt that they understood and believed in the Bay area as offering a realistic and accessible footprint for local democracy to flourish on any new footprint. It was felt that future consultation will confirm this. Councillor Brook pointed out that the paper before Members sought to enable the exploration of a Bay Option and for the reasons given, he was happy to second this proposal.

Councillor Archibald stressed the fact that this debate did not end tonight and would continue for some time. He explained that there would be engagement with parishes and further welcomed suggestions on how to continue discussions amongst Members and with residents. He referred to questions raised and extended an offer to meet with Members to provide detailed answers. He thanked Members for the comments and reiterated that approval of the motion would provide an opportunity to explore the pros and cons of a Morecambe Bay unitary authority and to develop a high level case.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the current position with devolution and Local Government Reform be noted;
- (2) the Leader and Chief Executive be authorised to work with Barrow Borough and Lancaster City councils to explore Local Government Reform and devolution, including the development of a high level case for a new unitary council for the area comprising the three districts;
- (3) it be noted that the high level case will be brought back to Cabinet and Council for agreement prior to submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; and
- (4) it be noted that the Secretary of State may then invite the Council to put forward a formal proposal which will be subject to future Cabinet and Council agreement.

C/49

CORPORATE FINANCIAL UPDATE QUARTER 1, 2020/21

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder presented the Corporate Financial Monitoring report for Quarter One of 2020/21, highlighting the Council's expenditure and income during the first three months of the financial year, but also including current projections of expenditure for the remainder of the year and officers' planned actions to ensure a balanced budget by the end of the financial year. The report also detailed virement requests in relation to the Community Housing Fund, Next Steps Accommodation Programme and South Lakeland House/Kendal Town Hall. The report further sought approval for the continuation of the emergency decision to increase counterparty limits for Money Market Funds to £10m for the remainder of 2020/21.

Councillor Jarvis drew attention to an error in the information contained within the report in the section on the Collection Fund, at paragraph 3.5.3. The Council expected to collection £44.5m of business rates during 2020/21 and retained 40% of the income, so the total value of the reduction was £300,000, and not £85,000 as shown.

Councillor Jarvis explained how the Council's financial position had been made more complex by Covid-19, with an estimated loss of £1.7m income in Quarter 1 of the current financial year and spend around £300,000 more than originally budgeted. During the quarter, it had become clear that Covid-19 would have a major impact, so budgets had been revised and approved by Cabinet and Council in June 2020. Overall, it was estimated that the impact of Covid-19 on the total cost of services in 2020/21 would be £800,000 higher than the £2.1m approved in June 2020, but it was expected that the recently approved Sales, Fees and Charges compensation grant from the Government would reduce the impact by around £1.4m to £1.5m overall. While it was impossible to clearly split the impact of Covid-19 from the normal business as usual costs, an overspend of £69,000 was currently projected for normal service costs. The impact of Covid-19 and delays in recovery action had resulted in higher levels of debt compared to previous years. Recovery action had now restarted and it was expected that new recovery posts should help the position.

Councillor Jarvis pointed out how the Council had not been distracted by the Covid-19 pandemic and had continued to monitor and control its budget and expenditure, and he thanked officers for their work during this busy time.

Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder. Councillor Ashcroft felt that the report demonstrated remarkable achievements in difficult times and stressed the importance of maintaining the finances of the Council during the current crisis.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the contents of the report and Appendices 1 to 3 be noted; and
- (2) the following be approved:-
 - (a) the continuation of the increase in counterparty limits for Money Market Funds to £10m for the remainder of 2020/21; and
 - (b) the virements set out in Section 3.3 of the report, namely with regard to the Community Housing Fund, Next Steps Accommodation Programme and South Lakeland House/Kendal Town Hall.

Note – The meeting adjourned for a health break at 8.35 p.m. and reconvened at 8.45 p.m., when the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) carried out a roll call, during which the same Members who had previously joined the meeting confirmed that they were present, with the exception of Councillors Alvin Finch, Matt Severn and Ian Wharton. Councillor Severn re-connected to the meeting part way through the following item, at 9.00 p.m.

C/50

ANNUAL PROCUREMENT UPDATE 2019/20

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder presented a report which provided an update on progress across the procurement function, a review of activity in the financial year 2019/2020 and a review of the 2020/21 procurement schedule. He welcomed the Council's new Procurement Specialist, Gillian Flowers, who had taken up the post in January 2020.

The Procurement Team had been busy over the past 12 months supporting the delivery of a large number of procurement exercises for goods and services, the Procurement Schedule for 2019/20 having listed 92. Of these exercises, 45 had been completed, with 14 showing as “work in progress”, two “scope for change” and 31 being carried forward to the 2020/21 Schedule. The Team had led the successful procurements for a number of important projects, including playgrounds, Kendal Markets, consultancy, ICT, Grange Lido and Kendal Town Hall. The Team continued to work closely with the Corporate Asset Manager and the Council’s Property Services Provider (Lambert Smith Hampton) to delivery property-related procurement projects covering servicing and work contracts. This contract would be reviewed later in the year.

The Council’s Constitution had permitted officers to conduct and conclude the contracting processes without further approval providing it was in line with the Procurement Schedule, to be approved by Council at least annually. There was still a requirement to comply with Forward Plan requirements on all contracts prior to contract award. Where a procurement process was over budget then approval would still be required in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules. Where an officer sought approval for a waiver or exemption under the Contract Procedure Rules this was also included in the Procurement Schedule. An updated Procurement Schedule for 2020/21 was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and included some additional procurement exercises to those approved in February 2020.

A Contract Review Board, comprising officers from the Legal, Governance and Democracy Team and the Finance Team, including Procurement, had been formed. The Board’s work had included identifying contracts impacted by Covid-19, with reports to Cabinet as required, the review of the use of certain frameworks to ensure value for money and working closely with officers from across the Council to understand requests for waivers and exemptions and to limit their use wherever possible. The emphasis of this Board was to focus on value for money.

A Commissioning Strategy had been prepared and approved by Council in July 2020 which would complement the Procurement Strategy. The Procurement Specialist was currently reviewing the Procurement Strategy in line with the Commissioning Strategy as a golden thread, and was also seeing how it fitted into the procurement guidance within the Constitution.

The report referred to challenges in the future. As the UK left the EU, it was envisaged that there would be changes to the Procurement Regulations, initially in terms of thresholds, but eventually in terms of regulation and accountability. The Public Contracting Regulations 2015 would stay in place in the mean-time. The Council’s procurement portal, the Chest, was one of those that would be compatible with the Government’s replacement for OJEU, so any threshold changes regarding advertisements for completion would be automatically put in place.

Internal audit had flagged up some need for improvement in contract management in the Council. With new staff and staff undertaking new roles, there were a number of staff that had not previously had procurement or contract management experience, so a training package was being put together as either a refresher tool or as an introduction to the new duties. Once again, this task had been delayed by Covid-19.

Covid-19 had been a big influencer on the markets this year and would continue to be so for the foreseeable future. Contractors had been seen to go into administration and the uptake for new business was down as suppliers fought to maintain their existing business.

The Council was looking for savings and value for money exercises in order to reduce its deficit over the next few years. Procurement was in a position to recommend routes to the market which could provide those savings, in particular where there were savings from economies of scale and compelling competition. There were areas where Procurement could provide additional support and advice, such as the use of Agency staff, where savings could be anticipated.

Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder, who was pleased to see reference within the report to evaluation of “green credentials”.

Councillor David Webster drew attention to an Executive Decision made on 30 July 2020 with regard to purchase of fleet vehicles and to a request he had made for information on the types of vehicles considered, a response to which he had not yet received. Whilst he appreciated that it was not currently appropriate to use electric refuse collection vehicles within South Lakeland, he felt that this could be a possibility for parking services vehicles. Councillor Webster asked for the reasons as to why electric vehicles were being turned down in the current Climate Crisis, accepting an offer of a written response. Councillor Philip Dixon, Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder, thanked Councillor Webster for his comments and undertook to ensure, if no response was received, that this was followed up.

Members welcomed the informative report.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That the updated Procurement Schedule 2020/21 attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

C/51

NOTICES OF MOTION

In accordance with Paragraph 11.1 of the Council’s Rules of Procedure, two notices of motion had been put to Council.

The first notice of motion had been put by Councillor Judy Filmore:-

“South Lakeland District Council

(i) acknowledges the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote renewable energy particularly in its economic plans for South Lakeland in partnership with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Cumbria Action For Sustainability (CAfS) and more recently Kendal Citizens’ Jury which is tasked with writing recommendations which will combat the effects of Climate Change;

(ii) further recognises

- that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being nearly impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,*
- that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier’s operation would enable and empower new local businesses in South Lakes, or councils such as the existing Cumbria County Council or any successors, to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local customers, and*

- *that revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions;*

(iii) accordingly resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by 201 MPs which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation; and

(iv) further resolves to

- *inform the local media of this decision, and*
- *write to local MPs (both of whom have pledged support for the Bill) to indicate SLDC support for the Bill and write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.”*

In moving the motion, Councillor Filmore informed Council that Community Renewable Energy generated less than 0.5% of the United Kingdom’s generating capacity; it’s potential was immense. Councillor Filmore referred to all the money paid for electricity bills and the thought of that money instead going to local community owned utilities. She further raised the potential for knock on benefits to the local economy: new jobs; resilience and recovery. She pointed out that this Bill was about more clean local energy and helping stop climate change, whilst creating local economic strength and resilience. Councillor Filmore believed that, the Bill, if made law, would transform the nation’s energy system and mean that the benefits of a nation-wide surge in clean community energy could be reaped. She urged Council to support the Local Electricity Bill being heard in Parliament.

Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder, seconded the motion. She stressed that local, renewable energy, accessible and affordable to communities in a manner that supported green regrowth, was the kind of vision endorsed by South Lakeland, which was surrounded by all the elements required to support clean, renewable energy: wind, hydro and solar. Since the scrapping of the Government’s community energy strategy, community groups had struggled to maintain a reasonable and reliable business case. Community energy access in low carbon form and the way distribution was licensed, she believed, needed simplifying to allow these schemes to have easier access to the market.

Members expressed support for the motion, raising the suitability of South Lakeland for water power and for the district to benefit from the natural resources around Morecambe Bay. Attention also drawn the Prime Minister’s commitment earlier in the day to ensure that offshore wind would produce enough electricity to power every home in Britain by 2030 and to the fact that a number of significant windfarms already existed within the District. Also raised was the desire for renewable energy for all new build homes as soon as possible. It was felt that there had been far too much reliance on centralised power generation for far too long and that any move towards localised, decentralised generation was to be welcomed, particularly when from renewable resources. It was further suggested that lessons could be learnt from Kendal’s twin town in Germany, Rinteln, which had a local energy producer.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – That the motion be carried.

The second notice of motion had been put by Councillor Suzie Pye:-

"I move that our Council pass a motion declaring a Poverty Emergency, and explore the feasibility of setting up a Poverty Truth Commission, working closely with our Morecambe Bay partners. This will aid our aim of tackling the root causes of poverty and inequalities, which is critical to the success of our Council Plan."

In moving the motion, Councillor Pye referred to how the current coronavirus pandemic had impacted South Lakeland which had been disproportionately hard hit in terms of furloughed workers due to its reliance on the tourism and hospitality sector. There had been a surge in numbers of families relying on food banks and similar food provision in local communities. 42% of eligible jobs had been furloughed, with the job retention scheme due to end this month. Councillor Pye explained that work would be carried out through the Building Financial Resilience group, in collaboration with partners such as the County Council, neighbouring district councils, the CCG and ICCs, the third sector, and the South Lakeland Community Resilience Group. Consideration would be given firstly to how to respond to those who were experiencing a lived experience of poverty right now and secondly, to putting measures in place to stop those who were on the cusp of experiencing financial hardship from falling further. Councillor Pye drew focus to the stigma which existed around poverty, which made it harder for people who need it, to access the help they needed and find a way out. There was a need to create communities which were free of this stigma and shame, and where help given was without judgement. She believed that, until this happened, the true extent of poverty in South Lakeland would remain, at least partially, hidden. Councillor Pye raised the possibility of launching a South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission as part of the Poverty Emergency. She believed that this was a crucial part of the process. She explained that Poverty Truth Commissions created open dialogue between two groups of people: those who understood poverty by living it and those who knew it from a governmental, civic or statutory point of view. The 'Commission' itself would facilitate meaningful, hopefully transformative, listening and learning between those two groups. Councillor Pye informed Members that she would be happy to expand on how the Poverty Truth Commission might look at a later date, but in the meantime, a couple of useful references were the Morecambe Bay PVT, and the West Cheshire PVT.

Councillor Mark Wilson seconded the motion.

A lengthy discussion ensued. The issue of child poverty was raised and the need to ensure that all children were given the opportunity to succeed, including the importance of empowering children through education. Also suggested was a need for the extension of free meals during school holidays and reference made to a vast increase in the use of Kendal Food Bank over recent months. Although poverty was a relative thing to some, it was real to others, and to many people now for the first time as a result of Covid-19. There had been a vast increase in poverty as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, with people's livelihoods and businesses falling apart, and people not being able to pay bills or rent and being faces with the possibility of eviction. Attention was also drawn to the working poor who were unable to access benefits. Poverty impacted on both physical and mental health and should not be dismissed as someone else's problem. It was felt that it was Members' duty as Councillors to protect and help the most vulnerable in society and demonstrate a willingness by declaring a Poverty Emergency, as well as establishing a Poverty Truth Commission and promoting the same to other government tiers in Cumbria. In order to be able to provide help, it was felt necessary to be able to first understand the root causes of poverty, working together with relevant charities and voluntary organisations. It was indicated that whilst the Opposition Group were in support of the motion, it's Members would have preferred for the cause to be examined before declaring a Poverty Emergency.

Councillor Mark Wilson stressed that poverty existed and was becoming worse and that now was the right time to pass a motion declaring a Poverty Emergency. He drew attention to DEFRA grants being provided across South Lakeland and to the Fair Share Food Scheme in Ulverston and a grant of £9,000 to £11,000 to help deliver over 3,500 meals this year, on top of what was already being provided by Food Banks. Councillor Wilson further stressed that he believed that first declaring a Poverty Emergency was the right way of going about addressing the problem, also reiterating the need to listen carefully to what was said by people in order to establish the root causes of poverty.

Note – In accordance with the Council’s Constitution, Part 4, Rule 8 (Rules of Procedure), a motion to continue the meeting past 9.30 p.m. was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Jonathan Brook and, there being no dissent, was carried.

Councillor Pye thanked Members for their words of support and responded to a number of questions and points raised during the debate. She directed Councillor Harvey to the Labour Market Statistics on poverty which provided the most up to date details and, in addition, drew attention to the Social Metrics Commission’s annual reports on poverty and to the Child Poverty Now website. She explained that the problem with statistics on poverty was that people had already been affected by the time they were released, with those people on the cusp already having fallen. Councillor Pye wished to place on record her thanks to Jemima Longcake from the Children’s Society for her contribution under Public Participation. Councillor Pye undertook to contact her and, in response to the question as to what the declaration would mean in terms of the area’s response to poverty, advised that it would be a combination of existing schemes and initiatives, as well as new thinking. Councillor Pye agreed with Councillor Jenkinson that the root causes were key to understanding poverty and that this was what the Truth Commission was about. Councillor Pye referred to Councillor Hennessy’s comments, agreeing that it was the hidden, absolute poverty that she was most concerned with, which was why, she believed, it was vital to eradicate the stigma. Councillor Pye agreed with Councillor Bingham that there would always be poverty in society, however, stressed the fact that there should not be people contemplating suicide as a result.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – That the motion be carried.

C/52

REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2019/20 AND 2020/21

Council was being asked to consider the appointment of a Substitute Member on the North West Local Authorities Employers’ Organisation for the remainder of the year further to Minute C/18 (2019/20) and, more recently, resignations from the Council. Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, proposed that Councillor Philip Dixon, Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder, be appointed to the role and was seconded by Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED – That Councillor Philip Dixon be appointed as the Council’s Substitute Representative on the North West Local Authorities Employers’ Organisation for the remainder of 2020/21.

C/53 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CABINET QUESTION TIME (30 MINUTES)

The Leader, Councillor Giles Archibald, addressed Council, referring to news earlier in the day that daily new Covid-19 cases had risen dramatically day on day to over 14,000 new cases. The incidence of Covid-19 cases in South Lakeland was also increasing.

Councillor Archibald said that these were extremely stressful times and he commended and thanked all Members for the leadership and commitment which they were demonstrating in their local communities during this crisis. Councillor Archibald also wished to recognise the tremendous work carried out by officers in housing the homeless, paying grants, re-organising business rates and protecting the vulnerable. On behalf of all councillors, he thanked officers for their continued engagement and excellence, and asked the Chief Executive and Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) to pass this on. Councillor Archibald also wished to recognise the terrific collaboration so far with the County and the towns and parishes. Collaborative working, he believed, was critical and Councillor Archibald was grateful for the collegiate, can-do attitude of all tiers of local government. Councillor Archibald further praised South Lakeland's residents, who were respecting the guidelines in towns, wearing masks and social distancing.

Councillor Archibald finally took the opportunity to confirm that the Council's job was to support the Government measures and to provide whatever assistance it could Central Government. These were testing times for all, and the Council was ready to be tested.

In accordance with paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3 of the Council's Rules of Procedure, the following written questions had been submitted to the meeting:-

From Councillor Tracy to Councillor Philip Dixon, Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder - *Following the change in COVID-19 restrictions to allow outside playgrounds to open, can you tell us how successful the re opening of our play parks has been?*

Councillor Dixon responded, informing Members that the re-opening of play parks had been 100% successful. Councillor Dixon expressed thanks to those officers who had worked tirelessly to enable 60 parks to open on 4 July 2020. He believed that the Council's parks and open spaces were vital, especially after a lengthy period of lockdown. He asked Members to contact either himself or officers if they were aware of any problems in this regard, stressing the need for parks to remain open.

From Councillor Eamonn Hennessy to Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder - *Can Cllr Jones provide an update regarding the levels of interest in the Community Climate Change Fund?*

Councillor Jones informed Members that there had been a good amount of interest in the Fund, with a total of 19 applicants. This indicated the level of interest from communities and a desire to carry out projects where they lived and worked. Councillor Jones explained that the Council was focussed on its residents' and businesses' wellbeing and its commitment was to ensure that South Lakes was the best place to live, work and explore. There was, however, no denying that these were challenging times. The Climate Action Plan was evidence of the Council's ability to continue to deliver in these difficult times and Councillor Jones hoped that, with the UK hosting COP 26 next year, the hard work on the ground that local authorities like South

Lakeland carried out was recognised and that the Government would provide more resources to support all ambitious plans to work towards being carbon neutral by 2030 in SLDC estate and across the county estate by 2037. Councillor Jones informed Members that the outcomes of the application process for the Community Climate Change Fund would be published before the end of October and she looked forward to some great projects coming to fruition.

From Councillor Ian Mitchell to Councillor Jonathan Brook, Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder - *The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has issued a Planning White Paper consultation document, which proposes radical changes to the planning system in England. Can the Portfolio Holder let us know, what the potential implications of the proposals are, for sustainable and affordable housing delivery across South Lakeland. Could he also tell us how he intends to respond to this consultation?*

Councillor Brook thanked Councillor Mitchell for drawing attention to this important Government consultation paper, which had significant implications for the way the planning system worked and delivered and therefore impacted on everyone in South Lakeland, the County of Cumbria and right across the Country. He informed Members that the consultation had started on 6 August and ran for 12 weeks, finishing on 29 October. The consultation sought views on proposals for reform of the planning system in England, sought to streamline and modernise the planning process, improve outcomes on design and sustainability, reform developer contributions and sought to ensure that more land was available for development where it was needed. Councillor Brook felt that that aspiration was to be applauded. He informed Members that there were a number of proposals that clearly made sense and would deliver improvements to the current planning system, such as simplifying the processes and systems, implementing new technology and generally speeding the process up. However, Councillor Brook believed that the White Paper raised a number of issues around which there were real and serious concerns. These included the ability of local people to influence development in their area and the limited scope for public involvement; the reliance on design codes that would lead to identikit housing estates; the probability that the delivery of affordable housing would be reduced, particularly, in a rural area such as South Lakeland; and the watering down of sustainability targets and protections for the local environment enshrined in the Council and Local Plan documents, to name but a few. Councillor Brook explained that he did not have time to provide a full answer to the question posed. Councillor Brook was, however, able to provide an assurance that the Council would be producing a full and robust response to the various points raised by the consultation. He had, therefore, asked officers to produce a report for Cabinet that would seek to ensure that Members were aware of the detail, scope and scale of changes to the planning system proposed in the Planning White Paper and the potential impacts on the District, the Local Plan and the delivery of the planning service if they were implemented. In addition, the report would ensure that these serious concerns about the potential impacts of some of the changes to the planning system and South Lakeland's local communities were conveyed effectively to the Government. In closing, Councillor Brook took the opportunity to encourage everyone, including town and parish councils, to respond to the consultation themselves, so that Government could be clear about what local people thought. He understood that the Cumbrian Association of Local Councils had recently received and distributed some information highlighting the details of the White Paper and he encouraged Members to use their place shaping and community leadership skills to ensure that the voices of their communities were heard in this process, before it was too late. Councillor Brook undertook to provide a full written response.

From Councillor Doug Rathbone to Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder - *Further to the Members' briefing earlier this week I'd like to ask the Portfolio Holder to expand on what the status is for Marshals in South Lakeland, given the recent and rapid changes in response to COVID-19 instituted locally and from central government. What is their status? Where would they potentially be deployed? Who is paying for them and following on from that, what sort of timescale are we looking at for deployment?*

Councillor Ashcroft informed Members that the initial deployment of Covid-19 marshals at Bowness and Windermere had been funded and agreed by this Council prior to the announcement by the Government on the use of marshals. This initial funding had come from the Economic Development budget, and Councillor Ashcroft was pleased to report that this had been a successful intervention to the issues faced by South Lakeland's main tourist hotspot, which was obviously a major driver for the district's Visitor Economy. Regulations had recently been relaxed although, Councillor Ashcroft pointed out, a little too late in the day, and there was now a modest amount of £15,000 that could be used to fund additional marshals. The Council was in discussion with its current supplier of marshals and would liaise with the communities in this regard, but with only £15,000 available, they would only be deployed in very specific and targeted locations. Despite the Prime Minister having said that Covid-19 funding could be used to fund Covid-19 marshals, there had been no hard information or suggestions as to from where this could be resourced outside the funding originally provided. Councillor Ashcroft undertook to provide a full written response.

C/54 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

No comments or questions had been received in respect of the minutes of committee meetings held between 8 June and 10 July 2020.

C/55 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR CHAIRMAN OF ANY COMMITTEE OR SUB-COMMITTEE

No questions had been received under Rule 10.6 of the Council's Rules of Procedure.

C/56 URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent Executive Decisions had been taken since that last meeting of the Council on 28 July 2020.

C/57 PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Act as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 by virtue of the Paragraph indicated.

Note –

For the benefit of the public viewing the virtual meeting, the Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder explained that the open session of the meeting would now close and the live stream cease.

The meeting producer confirmed that the live stream had ended.

Members disconnected from the Part I session and moved into the Part II private session. A roll call was taken, all Members still present at the meeting confirming that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in this part of the meeting and that there was nobody present in the room with them nor any recording devices nearby. Councillors Ben Berry, Michael Cornah, Gill Gardner, Rachael Hogg, Helen Irving, Janette Jenkinson, Jon Owen, Brian Rendell and Shirley-Anne Wilson had already left the meeting.

C/58

A590 CROSS-A-MOOR JUNCTION IMPROVEMENT

- *Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder, presented a report seeking approval to enable the funding package for the A590 Cross a Moor Junction Improvement Scheme to be secured and the legal agreements made so that scheme delivery could proceed. Councillor Ashcroft provided additional details on developments which had taken place following the report having been written and published.

Councillor Ashcroft, having moved the recommendations contained within the report, was seconded by Councillor Janet Willis, a Furness Peninsula Ward Member, who stressed the importance of the scheme in the delivery of the South Lakeland Local Plan and to local residents.

Members echoed support and were keen for the scheme, which would assist in the delivery of affordable housing and allow free flow of traffic between Barrow and Ulverston, to move forward.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) drew attention to the fact that the revision to the funding arrangements was not simply to be noted, drawing attention to the need for Council to approve amendments to the Capital Programme, as well as virements and further amendments to the budget as necessary.

No Member having raised concern when asked by the Chairman, it was

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the revision to the funding arrangements for the scheme be noted;
- (2) the amendments to the Capital Programme for 2020/21 and 2021/22 to accommodate the level of income and expenditure now associated with the Council's contribution to the scheme, including provision for the underwriting mechanism, be approved; and
- (3) the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, be authorised to:
 - (a) vire resources from the Right to Buy capital receipt in the event that expenditure need materialises from the underwriting mechanism; and
 - (b) make further amendments to the Council's budget in the event additional external funding is secured for the scheme.

The meeting ended at 10.05 p.m.