

SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings at a meeting of the Council held in the District Council Chamber, South Lakeland House, Kendal, on Tuesday, 25 February 2020, at 6.30 p.m.

Present

Councillors

Stephen Coleman (Chairman)

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pat Bell, Chris Hogg, Rachael Hogg, Dave Khan, Pete McSweeney (Vice-Chairman), Eric Morrell and Ian Wharton.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Sally Parnaby, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

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
Claire Read	Finance Specialist
Simon Rowley	Director of Customer and Commercial Services
Helen Smith	Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer)
David Sykes	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources

C/62

MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17 December 2019.

C/63 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Ian Kell addressed Council with regard to Agenda Item No.6 – Report from the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2020/2021 - which contained the Panel's recommendations for Members' Allowances with effect from 1 April 2020.

Mr Kell drew attention to the sensitive nature of the decision which, he said, demanded openness and the utmost public scrutiny by representative tax payers. He questioned the validity of membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel. He believed that membership of the Panel was systematically gerrymandered and that, by denying public access to the minutes of the Panel, the Council was preventing true public scrutiny. He referred to correspondence between himself and the Leader of the Council which had resulted in Mr Kell substantiating his claims in an open letter to the Leader, the Chief Executive and Tim Farron, Member of Parliament, to which no reply had been received. Mr Kell summarised his evidence of gerrymandering of recruitment to and membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Mr Kell believed that a former Monitoring Officer had, a few years ago, made some headway in the process of recruitment to the Independent Remuneration Panel, however, felt that the malpractices outlined by him this evening and in his correspondence of June last year had escaped scrutiny at that time or had developed since. Mr Kell suggested that it was time for a further review of the process.

C/64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

RESOLVED – That the following declarations of notice and dispensations be noted:-

(1) dispensations provided by the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) and the Independent Member under Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, Responsibility for Council Functions, paragraphs 2.7 and 4.12, for a four year period, relating to Agenda Item Nos. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

(2) that all Members of the Planning Committee have reserved their positions in relation to the consideration of the planning merits of the Grange-over-Sands Lido planning application and that the decisions to be made at this meeting relate only to the budget allocation; and

(3) that the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No.7 as a Trustee of the War Widows' Association which forms an exempt group under the proposed Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

C/65 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLVED – That it be noted that there are no excluded items on the Agenda.

C/66 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred Members to his list of engagements attended since the last meeting which had been circulated at the commencement of the meeting. He drew attention to the one engagement which had been attended on his behalf by Councillor Robin Ashcroft. This had been a visit to the Lake District Holocaust Project on 27 January 2020, and the Chairman raised the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day.

C/67**REPORT FROM THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR 2020/2021**

Mrs Sally Parnaby, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), was invited to present the Panel's report to Council. The report recommended an increase (in line with the 2020/21 public sector pay award) up to a maximum of 2% on the Basic Allowance for 2020/21 to bring it up to £4,201.14 per annum.

The IRP had also recommended the following:-

- no amendments to current Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs);
- the introduction of an additional SRA of £250 per annum to Members of the Planning Committee in recognition of the additional workload and training involved, site visits and the impact/complexity of matters addressed and decided upon by the Committee;
- other than the Group Leaders' Allowance, Members should receive no more than one SRA;
- out of County Mileage Allowance to remain as part of the single travel allowance scheme as per the previous year;
- travel expenses to be in accordance with the maximum rates set by HMRC without attracting a tax charge (currently 45p per mile), this to apply to the first 150 miles of a return journey regardless of the destination and 25p per mile thereafter;
- subsistence expenses to increase by RPI as at 1st April 2020;
- no change to Childcare/Dependant Carers' Allowance. Payments to remain at a maximum allowance of £15 per hour. The Allowance to be paid from the time the recipient leaves home to time of return; and
- co-optees' Allowance be increased by up to a maximum of 2% to bring it up to £39.15 per meeting.

In presenting the report, Mrs Parnaby thanked those Members and officers who had provided valuable input, apologising for those names which had been omitted from the report in error. She drew particular attention to two of the recommendations, firstly explaining the Panel's practice when recommending an increase in the Basic Allowance to be mindful of the public sector pay award. She advised, however, that discussions had not yet concluded in this regard, nevertheless that the recommendation was for an increase, in line with the public sector 2020 pay award up to a maximum of 2%. Secondly, Mrs Parnaby referred to the recommendation for the introduction of a SRA of £250 per annum for Members of the Planning Committee not already in receipt of a SRA. She explained that this was due to significant evidence which had highlighted the complex nature of the work carried out, the commitment required, the number of meetings and their duration, site visits and additional specialist training. Mrs Parnaby next referred to the three-Member ward system which had come into effect from May 2018 and to the resulting impact on the role of councillors. She informed Council that the Panel would be reviewing travel expenses in next year's work programme, however, explained that the issue of the three-Member ward system did not fall within the remit of the Panel. Mrs Parnaby closed, informing Members that one of the Panel's actions for next year would be to look at streamlining the process, whilst not detracting from scrutiny. On behalf of the Panel, she asked Council to consider the recommendations.

In moving the adoption of the recommendations, Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, stressed the importance of remuneration for Members in order to ensure that the position was open to all. This was an important job which deserved recognition and recompense. He refuted Mr Kell's accusations of gerrymandering and offered to meet with political group

leaders to discuss the process which he believed to be above and beyond reproach. Councillor Archibald expressed thanks to the Chairman and members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for their thorough and diligent work. Councillor Archibald drew attention to the opportunity for Members, should they so wish, to waive their allowance which would be put into a reserve to support the Council's anti-poverty activity.

Members, on the whole, expressed support for the recommendation. Whilst some interest was expressed with regard to Mr Kell's comments regarding membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel, his suggestions to abolish or reduce allowances were not welcomed as it was felt that this would open up the role of a councillor only to those who could afford it. Although recognised that the issue of three-Member wards did not fall within the Panel's remit, attention was drawn to the fact that this had changed the dynamic of how councillors operated, with areas having significantly increased in size and, as a result, workload. It was also suggested that the recommendation for the introduction of a SRA of £250 to Planning Committee Members not already in receipt of a SRA did not actually reflect the additional workload involved.

Councillor Mark Wilson having seconded the proposal, it was subsequently

RESOLVED - That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2020/21, as attached at Appendix B of the Panel Report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2020.

C/68

CORPORATE FINANCIAL UPDATE QUARTER 3, 2019/20

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, presented the third quarter financial monitoring report of 2019/20. The report provided the projected year end position based on performance to the end of Quarter 3 and officers' planned actions to ensure a balanced budget by the end of the financial year.

As a result of the new leadership structure from April 2019, the Finance Team had split and re-allocated the budgets approved in February 2019 to the new Operational Leads and Lead Specialists. This was a moving situation, and the budgets reflected the current position of services, which had changed from Quarter 1.

The report and appendices included details relating to the revenue budget, capital expenditure, collection of Council Tax and business rates and the Council's current position with regard to debt collection.

Appendix 1 set out the revenue variances to date. The approved net revenue budget for 2019/20 set by Council in February 2019 had been £14m, which had included a Customer Connect savings target of £740,000 and a vacancy factor savings target of £593,000. Additionally, carry forward requests of £510,000 had been approved by Cabinet on 24 April 2019. Expenditure budgets had been increased in accordance with those approved carry forwards along with the matching funding from reserves. Overall, at the end of Quarter 3, budget monitoring had identified a forecast year-end underspend of £15,000. Trends identified in these budget monitoring results had been fed into the 2020/21 budget setting process.

Appendix 2 set out the position on the Capital Programme. The capital budget for 2019/20 approved by Council in November 2019 had been £6.988m. Table 4 in the report summarised requests to update the Capital Programme totalling £140,500 as a result of additional external funding for several schemes. Expenditure against the Programme to the end of Quarter 3 had been £3.206m.

Appendix 3 provided an update on Treasury Management for the quarter. Investments had performed better than the relevant benchmarks. No repayment of existing borrowing or new borrowing was anticipated up to the end of the financial year.

As part of Phase 1 of the Customer Connect Programme, there were a number of transition costs resulting in a projected overspend in service budgets. Following appointments to Phase 2, the redundancy cost budget had been underspent, and it had been agreed with the Customer Connect Board and the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder to use £213,540 (as identified in Period 7 monitoring) of this to cover the Phase 1 transition costs. Whilst still being used to cover staff costs related to Customer Connect, due to the use not being exactly as initially indicated, it was felt appropriate, for transparency and completeness, to also seek approval from Council, as the amount was over the £100,000 limit identified in the Financial Procedure Rules. Cabinet, at its meeting on 5 February 2020, had given consideration to the report and had recommended that Council confirm agreement in this regard.

Councillor Jarvis, in closing, said that the report highlighted that this Council was financially well-managed, running a balanced budget whilst continuing to deliver services and invest in improvements to the way it carried out business. He thanked the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) and the Finance Specialist for their work in producing the report.

Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, added words of appreciation to the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) and her Team, as well as past Portfolio Holders, and asked the Chief Executive to pass on thanks to all officers involved. Councillor Archibald said that it was remarkable in this age of austerity that the Council had been able to present such sound financial statements and he felt that all Members should be proud of what was being delivered. He expressed further thanks to all Members and to Councillor Jarvis for his presentation.

Concern having been raised, Councillor Jarvis explained that the contract for management of the Braithwaite Fold Caravan Park had expired, however, that nobody had been prepared to submit a tender on the existing basis. It had, therefore, subsequently been necessary to seek tenders on a different basis and an announcement was due to be made in the coming days. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) clarified that the site was, as a matter of course, closed during January and February in each year. In response to concerns as to the shortfall of income on the caravan park and to the potential for loss of custom with people turning to different sites, Councillor Jarvis explained that the site provided a significant source of income to the Council. It was, therefore, critical to agree an appropriate contract for management of the site in the long-term. He also pointed out that a commitment had been made to anyone seeking to use the site for contact to be made with them as soon as the site was re-opened.

Councillor Jarvis undertook to provide written responses in relation to queries raised regarding the £50,000 underspend on the Local Plans budget, the £43,000 overspend on car parks and in particular the £14,000 overspend on rates bills in this regard, and the £20,000 underspend on fuel in Waste Collection and Kerbside Recycling.

In response to a query about the £190,000 saving arising from the re-tendering of the insurance contract, Councillor Jarvis confirmed that the Council had like for like cover on all business operations. With regard to the projected shortfall of £106,000 on sale of recyclates due to current market prices of materials, Councillor Jarvis informed Members that this was an extremely volatile area. Councillor Jarvis responded to

concerns regarding the use of agency staff, explaining that this had been necessary during implementation of the Customer Connect Programme and that without those people, the Council's work would not have been done. He further drew Members' attention to the fact that overall expenditure on staff had been below budget.

The Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) was able to provide clarification with regard to the query on the £43,000 overspend on car parks and in particular the £14,000 overspend on rates bills in this regard. The increase in the rates bills was due to the re-valuation of the South Lakeland House Multi-Storey Car following a national rate ruling. In addition, she was pleased to inform Members that the Council's insurance cover was, in fact, better than like for like, as cover had increased in some areas.

It was, subsequently, unanimously

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the contents of the report and Appendices 1 to 3 thereto be noted; and
- (2) agreement of the Phase 1 transition cost virement of £213,540 as identified in paragraph 3.4 of the report be confirmed.

C/69

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Note – Linda Fisher, Legal Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) declared a personal interest in this item of business by virtue of the fact that she was a Trustee of the War Widows Association. She remained in the Chamber during the discussion and voting on the item, although with no voting rights as an officer of the Council.

On 1 April 2013, the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme had been abolished and replaced with a locally-determined scheme known as the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. South Lakeland District Council had introduced a scheme that mirrored the previous national scheme, which meant that nobody was worse off under the Local Scheme and that the most vulnerable people in the District were protected from any reductions in support.

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, presented a detailed report, informing Members that the Local Government Finance Act 2012 (as amended) required Local Authorities to approve their Council Tax Reduction Scheme on an Annual Basis by the 11 March for the following financial year.

After considering options for change, including the additional income, costs and risks associated with any changes, it was expected that the current Scheme would continue unchanged for the financial year 2020/21. This was with the exception of applying the annual upratings and other minor income and capital disregards.

Attention was drawn to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 which had come into force on 11 February 2020 and to minor amendments contained therein. Equalities impacts had been outlined within the report.

The report had been considered and recommended to Council for approval by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 February 2020.

Councillor Jarvis informed Members that it was expected that a review of South Lakeland's Council Tax Reduction Scheme was due to be undertaken in the forthcoming year to assess the impacts on the Scheme of the roll-out of Universal Credit. He pointed out that the overall cost of the scheme for the South Lakeland area was approximately £5m, split between this Council, Cumbria County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner, stressing the fact that this was not something that the Council had to do, but chose to. He expressed pride with regard to cross party support of this measure to help protect the poorest and most vulnerable residents in the District.

Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendations contained within the report, adding that the Revised HB Circular referred to at recommendation (1)(b) had been issued on 5 January 2020. He was seconded by Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder, who was also proud to be associated with an authority which went beyond its statutory obligation when it came to helping the most vulnerable in society, alleviating poverty and tackling inequality in South Lakeland. The Council remained one of only 36 authorities to offer a fully-funded Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age claimants – this was not cheap, however, Councillor Pye felt it to be value for money, and allowed people to manage, to then flourish, and even to thrive.

Members echoed what had been said and thanked the Finance Team for putting together a balanced budget to enable the Council to offer this Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

It was, subsequently, unanimously

RESOLVED – That, due consideration having been given to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 1 to the report, the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme be approved as the most appropriate scheme for this Council for the financial year commencing 1 April 2020, subject to the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, being authorised to:-

- (1) make all necessary updates to this Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme to comply with any statutory requirements that may be issued by Central Government;
- (2) make all necessary amendments to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme to uprate the allowances and premiums in accordance with Revised HB Circular issued on 15 January 2020 by the Department of Work and Pensions; and
- (3) publish the updated scheme in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

C/70

2020/21 TO 2024/25 BUDGET

Note – All Members of the Planning Committee reserved their positions in relation to consideration of the planning merits of the Grange-over-Sands Lido planning application, with the decision to be made under this item relating only to the budget allocation. All remained in the Chamber during the discussion and voting on the item.

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, presented the report, which first drew attention to Appendix 1 which contained the Chief Finance Officer's Advice on the Robustness of Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves under the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003. The report also contained the recommendations made by Cabinet on 5 February 2020 for Council to determine its 2020/21 to 2024/25 Five Year Budget, including fees and charges, the Capital Programme and the Pay Policy Statement. A balanced budget for 2020/21 was presented, including an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2%. This meant that the Council would be in a position to deliver the priorities set out in the Council Plan within its resources. The delivery of the Customer Connect Programme had substantially reduced future budget deficits. A one-off local government finance settlement had delivered additional, one-off income in 2020/21. Options still needed to be developed to mitigate the expected funding reductions from April 2020/21.

The report included a summary position of the latest Medium Term Financial Plan projections which provided a summary five year annual position of the overall surplus or deficit on the General Fund Revenue Budget. The assumptions and financial implications were kept constantly under review as circumstances changed. A summary of the known changes at this stage was provided at Table 1 of the report, with a more detailed analysis of expenditure and income set out in Sections 2 and 3 of the Draft Budget Book at Appendix 2 to the report, including a reconciliation of the latest projections compared to previous deficit projections in Section 2a of the Draft Budget Book.

The projections all included the full Customer Connect savings delivered to date. In addition, the one-off local government finance settlement and deferment of the new funding model until at least April 2021 left the Council with substantial additional one-off income of around £2.7m for 2020/21, turning a projected budget deficit into a budget surplus. The projected annual revenue surplus before contribution to General Reserve totalled £11,000 in 2020/21, but this was a one-year only surplus, with a projected deficit for £1m in 2021/22 rising to circa £2.6m by 2024/25.

Work was underway to resolve the projected deficits. The future projections were based on information available at the time of preparation, along with the broad set of assumptions detailed in paragraph 3.9 of the report. The assumptions, proposals and calculations included in the report and on the appendices attached thereto would be subject to change as more information from internal and external sources was provided and as options were refined and decisions taken.

The Council had a statutory duty to set a balanced budget. Work was underway to resolve the projected deficits from April 2021 onwards. Future year estimates would be kept under review as part of the MTFP process to ensure that savings plans were sufficient to set balanced budgets. Any additional budget pressures or discretionary, fixed term growth items would need to be funded by savings in existing budgets.

The report provided details with regard to statutory consultation which had been carried out. In addition, the draft budgets had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2020, and details of discussion at that meeting were outlined. The Lake Administration Committee, the Licensing Committee and the Planning Committee had, during January 2020, considered draft budgets for their services. The Conservative Group and the Labour Group had both been approached and given an opportunity to submit proposals for alternative budget options.

The precepts from Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner had been confirmed, at the values previously proposed, on 14 and 19 February 2020 respectively.

Councillor Jarvis was pleased to be able to present, despite the current climate of uncertainty, a budget that supported an ambitious action plan while preparing the Council for the challenges ahead. He thanked officers, particularly the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) and the Finance Specialist, for their hard work.

Councillor Jarvis was happy to move the recommendations contained within the report and reminded Members what this budget for 2020/21 brought, whilst remaining fiscally prudent:-

- protecting all of the Council's core services;
- freezing hourly parking fees for another year;
- securing the future for Locally Important Projects;
- putting money behind key projects on the Environment and Climate Change;
- building Mintworks II for the benefit of the local economy;
- funding £6m investment in affordable homes with South Lakes Housing;
- working for a new leisure centre in Ulverston;
- completing the much needed refurbishment of Kendal Town Hall;
- sorting out Grange Lido and Promenade;
- enhancing the flood defence work in Kendal;
- driving savings and income from the Council's accommodation, car parks and other assets, while improving their environmental footprint; and
- investing in play grounds, disable toilets and Changing Places.

Councillor Jarvis was seconded by Councillor Matt Severn.

Councillor John Holmes, Shadow Cabinet Deputy Leader (Finance and Resources Portfolio), also thanking officers for their work, informed Council that there was much within the Budget with which the opposition agreed, especially the retention of the Locally Important Projects Fund despite the New Homes Bonus coming to an end and also the continuance of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. He, however, raised a number of areas where the Opposition group felt that more should be done to address issues of concern to residents. These related to a lack of car parking to ease congestion; whether the Council was really addressing the need for affordable housing to meet demand; the changes on the High Street; the opening hours for the multi storey car park; additional costs arising from the Customer Connect Programme; and the additional costs of contract and agency employment. Councillor Holmes hoped that the Council could work, cross party, in the coming year to see how best to address the concerns raised.

Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, welcomed Councillor Holmes' comments, reminding the Opposition of the opportunity which had been provided for the submission of an alternative budget and extending an offer to meet with Opposition Members. Councillor Archibald further commended an exciting budget, also thanking all involved and remarking on what the Council planned to achieve above and beyond statutory requirements.

Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder, referred to inclusion within the budget of improvements to disabled toilets and Changing Places facilities, welcoming improved accessibility to key areas in South Lakeland.

Councillor Severn, having seconded the motion, suggested that there was not a need for longer opening hours at Westmorland Shopping Centre Car Park. He pointed out that the long-term savings due to be made by the Customer Connect Programme were critical and also drew attention to the need for the 2% increase in Council Tax. He emphasised the importance of the Authority employing agency staff in order to ensure that the Council continued to deliver services to residents. He closed, referring to the additional employment space that would be delivered through Mintworks II, and commended the budget to Members.

Councillor Jarvis referred to the concern raised regarding the costs of contract and agency employment, explaining that the total staffing cost had been offset by vacancies in permanent posts this year. He explained the need to employ agency staff to cover for sickness or absence and to importance of ensuring that refuse trucks were appropriately crewed. With regard to the aspiration to increase employment prospects, he believed that Mintworks II would help to address this aim. Councillor Jarvis was keen for discussion on housing and for examination of what was truly affordable. He lastly referred to car parking, highlighting that there was free evening car parking in Kendal and drawing attention to the Earlybird Scheme, also drawing attention to improvements to the Council's car parking offer.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and the Council's Rules of Procedure, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:-

The following Members voted in favour (29) – Councillors Giles Archibald, Robin Ashcroft, Rupert Audland, Jonathan Brook, Helen Chaffey, Stephen Coleman, Tracy Coward, Philip Dixon, Judy Filmore, Alvin Finch, Gill Gardner, Eamonn Hennessy, Hazel Hodgson, Vicky Hughes, Anne Hutton, Andrew Jarvis, Dyan Jones, Helen Ladhams, Malcolm Lamb, Susanne Long, Jon Owen, Suzie Pye, Doug Rathbone, Matt Severn, Peter Thornton, David Webster, Janet Willis, Mark Wilson and Shirley-Anne Wilson.

There were no votes against.

The following Members abstained (14) – Councillors Caroline Airey, James Airey, Ben Berry, Roger Bingham, Brian Cooper, Michael Cornah, Anne Hall, Tom Harvey, John Holmes, Kevin Holmes, Helen Irving, Janette Jenkinson, Kevin Lancaster and Brian Rendell.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) prior to the approval of the 2020/21 Budget, the Chief Finance Officer's Statutory Report, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (2) a Budget Requirement of £9,121,400 for 2020/21, as set out in Section 2b of the Draft Budget Book (Appendix 2 to the report) be adopted;
- (3) a 2% increase in Council Tax, increasing the Band D Council Tax by £3.91 to £199.54 for District Council Services for 2020/21 be approved as part of a balanced revenue budget;
- (4) the detailed service budgets as set out in Section 3 of the Draft Budget Book be approved;

- (5) the latest Collection Fund Estimates, Parish Council precepts and Parish Council taxes for 2020/21, as set out in Section 4 of the Draft Budget Book, be noted;
- (6) the Capital Programme, as set out in Section 5 of the Draft Budget Book, be approved;
- (7) the Reserves, as set out in Section 6 of the Draft Budget Book, be approved;
- (8) the Fees and Charges Book for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved;
- (9) the Statutory Pay Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be adopted and published;
- (10) the Equality Impact Assessment and Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment attached to the report at Appendices 5 and 6 respectively be noted; and
- (11) it be noted that the proposals contained in the report have been incorporated into the Procurement Schedule, Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Framework elsewhere on the agenda.

C/71**CALCULATING AND SETTING THE 2020/21 COUNCIL TAX**

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, presented a report to enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2020/21.

The precepts from Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner had been confirmed, at the values previously proposed, on 14 and 19 February 2020 respectively.

As the billing authority, South Lakeland District Council was required to undertake a series of calculations in order to determine the Council Tax to be set for each parish within the District. Once the Council Tax had been approved, Council Tax bills would be issued to each household in South Lakeland during March 2020 in accordance with the amounts set, subject to any reductions for discounts, exemptions or reliefs.

Councillor Jarvis drew attention to minor typographical errors contained within the report and appendix, namely that the recommendation on the report referred to Appendix A rather than Appendix 1; that the financial years referred to within the recommended resolutions contained in Appendix 1 at B2 and B3 should both read 2020/21; and that reference to "x" in the recommended resolution contained in Appendix 1 at G8 should read "3(f)". Councillor Jarvis proposed that the suggested Council Tax Resolution contained within Appendix 1 of the report be approved. This was seconded by Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and the Council's Rules of Procedure, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:—

The following Members voted in favour (38) – Councillors Giles Archibald, Robin Ashcroft, Rupert Audland, Jonathan Brook, Helen Chaffey, Stephen Coleman, Michael Cornah, Tracy Coward, Philip Dixon, July Filmore, Alvin Finch, Gill Gardner, Anne Hall, Tom Harvey, Eamonn Hennessy, Hazel Hodgson, John Holmes, Kevin Holmes, Vicky Hughes, Anne Hutton, Helen Irving, Andrew Jarvis, Janette Jenkinson, Dyan Jones, Helen Ladhams, Malcolm Lamb, Kevin Lancaster, Susanne Long, Jon Owen, Suzie Pye, Doug Rathbone, Brian Rendell, Matt Severn, Peter Thornton, David Webster, Janet Willis, Mark Wilson and Shirley-Anne Wilson.

The following Members voted against (2) – Councillors Caroline Airey and James Airey.

The following Members abstained (3) – Councillors Ben Berry, Roger Bingham and Brian Cooper.

RESOLVED – That

(1) it be noted that on 20 December 2019, under powers delegated under Paragraph 3.1 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) calculated the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2020/21 by means of an Administrative Decision:-

(a) for the whole of the District as 45,712.13 (Item T in the formula in Section 31(B) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the Act"), as amended); and

(b) for each part of the Council's area:-

ALDINGHAM	543.71	LAMBRIGG	44.99
ANGERTON	8.25	LEVENS	576.10
ARNSIDE	1,164.41	LINDALE AND NEWTON IN CARTMEL	430.16
BARBON	134.47	LONGSLEDDALE	42.34
BEETHAM	891.00	LOWER ALLITHWAITE	900.61
BLAWITH & SUBBERTHWAITE	139.09	LOWER HOLKER	717.33
BROUGHTON EAST	151.79	LOWICK	129.34
BROUGHTON WEST	443.41	LUPTON	87.53
BURTON IN KENDAL	627.66	MANSERGH	77.71
CARTMEL FELL	251.39	MANSRIGGS	20.99
CASTERTON	180.74	MIDDLETON	51.75
CLAIFE	241.40	MILNTHORPE	734.64
COLTON	497.17	NATLAND	515.70
CONISTON	472.29	NETHER STAVELEY	316.26
CROOK	220.85	NEW HUTTON	177.81
CROSTHWAITE & LYTH	390.82	OLD HUTTON & HOLMESCALES	180.88
DENT	350.94	OSMOTHERLEY	120.11
DOCKER	26.81	OVER STAVELEY	216.72
DUNNERDALE	79.70	PENNINGTON	769.15
EGTON WITH NEWLAND	386.12	PRESTON PATRICK	177.27
FAWCETT FOREST	15.74	PRESTON RICHARD	498.35

FIRBANK	63.30	SATTERTHWAITE	129.25
GARSDALE	124.52	SCALTHWAITERIGG	43.25
GRANGE	2,138.24	SEDBERGH	1,064.14
GRAYRIGG	104.10	SEDGWICK	191.31
HAVERTHWAITE	377.75	SKELSMERGH	168.97
HAWKSHEAD	339.21	SKELWITH	116.97
HELSINGTON	172.57	STAINTON	152.30
HEVERSHAM	352.58	STAVELEY IN CARTMEL	276.54
HINCASTER	105.40	STRICKLAND KETEL	509.48
HOLME	583.68	STRICKLAND ROGER	149.36
HUGILL	245.58	TORVER	80.39
HUTTON ROOF	107.46	ULVERSTON	4,122.42
KENDAL	10,500.63	UNDERBARROW	212.45
KENTMERE	61.51	URSWICK	621.89
KILLINGTON	81.29	WHINFELL	79.42
KIRKBY IRELETH	516.81	WHITWELL & SELSIDE	100.41
KIRKBY LONSDALE	919.94	WINDERMERE	4,107.49
LAKES	2,474.91	WITHERSLACK	313.11
		Total	45,712.13

(2) the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for the financial year 2020/21 (excluding parish precepts) be calculated as £9,121,398.00. No costs are to be treated as special expenses;

(3) the following amounts be calculated for the financial year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act, as amended by the Localism Act 2011:-

(a) £63,477,493.31 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils;

(b) £52,571,119.00 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act; including Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates;

(c) £10,906,374.31 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated in accordance with section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R - P in the formula in Section 31B of the Act);

(d) £238.59 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R) all divided by Item T(1(a) above) calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including parish precepts);

(e) £1,784,976.311 being the aggregate of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Appendix 2 to the report); and

(f) £199.54 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its District to which no parish precept relates.

(4) the amounts to be taken into account in respect of each category of dwellings listed in a particular valuation band be calculated by multiplying the amounts at 3(f) above by the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as being applicable to each valuation band and dividing by the proportion applicable to Band D:-

	BAND A £	BAND B £	BAND C £	BAND D £	BAND E £	BAND F £	BAND G £	BAND H £
South Lakeland District Council	133.03	155.20	177.37	199.54	243.88	288.22	332.57	399.08

(5) the amounts to be taken into account in respect of each category of dwellings listed in a particular valuation band for each of the Council's areas be calculated by adding to the amounts at 3(f) the amounts the parish precepts relating to dwellings in those parts of the district to which parish precept relate and in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as being applicable to each valuation band and diving by the proportion applicable to Band D, as set out at Appendix 1 to these minutes;

(6) it be noted that the County Council and the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner have provisionally issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Act for each category of dwellings in the Council's district as indicated below:-

	BAND A £	BAND B £	BAND C £	BAND D £	BAND E £	BAND F £	BAND G £	BAND H £
CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL								
Main Precept	874.84	1,020.65	1,166.45	1,312.26	1,603.87	1,895.49	2,187.10	2,624.52
Adult Social Care Element	85.53	99.79	114.04	128.30	156.81	185.32	213.83	256.60
TOTAL CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL	960.37	1,120.44	1,280.49	1,440.56	1,760.68	2,080.81	2,400.93	2,881.12
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER	177.06	206.57	236.08	265.59	324.61	383.63	442.65	531.18

(5) in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the amounts of Council Tax payable in respect of each category of dwelling for the financial year 2020/21 be calculated as the aggregate amounts shown in Appendix 2 to these minutes; and

(6) it be determined that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2020/21 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Act.

C/72

2020/21 PROCUREMENT SCHEDULE

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, reported that, since April 2016, 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. 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.

The Procurement Schedule for 2020/21 was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. There were 109 procurement projects identified, which was considerably higher than the 77 procurement exercises originally approved for 2019/20.

The report had also been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2020 and by Cabinet on 5 February 2020. Cabinet had recommended the Procurement Schedule 2020/21 to Council for approval.

In presenting the report, Councillor Jarvis informed Members that the list would continue to evolve during the forthcoming year.

Councillor Jarvis undertook to provide a written response with regard to a query relating to the inclusion in the Procurement Schedule of the Enforcement and Collection Agency Service, with particular regard to the Council's current arrangements and the need to ensure that bailiffs could not attend households during the hours of darkness. With regard to another query around purchasing of refuse collection vehicles, as well as smaller fleet vehicles, and the need for the Council to look at electric vehicles, Councillor Jarvis was in agreement, as well as the need to look at other options, for example, hydrogen powered vehicles. He explained that the specification for all such procurements included the potential for electric vehicles or other alternatives, and all tenders were assessed for environmental impact. Trials to date had demonstrated that electric vehicles were not suitable for South Lakeland's large and hilly area. A hybrid vehicle was, however, currently being considered for use. Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder, highlighted the need for care in moving forward too quickly in this regard.

Councillor Jarvis having moved approval of the Procurement Schedule for 2020/21, Councillor Jonathan Brook, Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder seconded the motion, pointing out that the Scheduled demonstrated the ambitions and aspirations of the Council.

It was unanimously

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

C/73

TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL STRATEGIES

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, presented a report setting out the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 to 2024/25 and the Capital Strategy for 2020/21 – 2033/34. The Strategies had been updated to reflect the 2020/21 Budget and Capital Programme which had been considered earlier in the meeting.

The strategies fulfilled five key legislative requirements relating to the setting of prudential indicators, the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Investment Strategy and the Capital Strategy, details of which were provided.

The Treasury Management Strategy was based on the proposed Capital Programme for 2020/21 – 2024/25 which had been considered at Minute C/70 above.

The Capital Strategy included potential capital expenditure not currently in the proposed Programme and arising from the review of Council Assets in 2018/19, adjusted for any proposal brought as part of the 2020/21 Capital Programme. The resulting indicators in the Capital Strategy were, therefore, higher as it included potential expenditure and borrowing which might not arise, depending on future decisions around service delivery. For example, the 2020/21 Capital Programme included a programme of works to the shopping centre car park which would extend its life beyond the Capital Strategy timeframe. This had resulted in £12m of spend for 2029-30 – 2033/34 being removed from the longer term Programme. The Capital Strategy would assist in ensuring that the Council had funds available in the future to meet future opportunities which might arise. It also considered organisational issues, including how the Capital Programme would be prioritised and considerations, including capacity to deliver.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2020. It had also been considered by Cabinet on 5 February 2020 when the strategies and authorised borrowing limits had been recommended to Council for approval.

Councillor Jarvis commended the Treasury Management Strategy which he felt to be prudent and professional whilst allowing the Council to deliver above benchmark returns, generating year-on year income that supported its revenue budget. He hoped that publication of the Capital Strategy in such detail improved the transparency of the Council. He moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Mark Wilson.

During discussion, it was raised that, due to the large amount of complex terms and details, briefing sessions might be provided for councillors on how the Finance Team managed risks and investments, and Councillor Jarvis welcomed the suggestion. Attention was drawn to the decision made by Central Government to increase the Public Works Loans Board premium by 1% and the detrimental impact on prudent councils. Councillor Jarvis acknowledged the increase in premium which made some projects less viable, some of which were to provide social rather than financial benefits, and hoped no further pressure would be placed on those prudent councils who wished to invest for the benefit of residents.

The appropriateness of investment in property was raised and it was observed that what was suitable for pension authorities was not always appropriate for district councils.

RESOLVED – That the following be approved:-

- (1) the Treasury Management and Capital Strategies at Appendices 1 to 4 of the report; and
- (2) the authorised and operational borrowing limits set out at Appendix 1, Table 6 of the report.

C/74

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

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Giles Archibald, addressed Council with regard to the Covid 19 Virus. He referred to the stock market's dramatic reaction and to the need for all to be alert to the danger posed by the virus. Officers had circulated advice to Members earlier in the afternoon. Councillor Archibald referred to planning being

carried out behind the scenes and advised Council that he had asked Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder, to actively engage with appropriate organisations such as the County Council, the Police and the hospital, so that the District Council could fully understand the repercussions and its role. Members needed reassurance that all reasonable measures were being put in place. In addition, Councillor Archibald informed Members that he had asked the Chief Executive to ensure that everything possible was done to ensure that the Council's buildings were kept virus-free and that every precaution was taken. He suggested that all political party leaders and Shadow Cabinet be kept informed on a confidential basis and advised that Councillor Pye would arrange meetings as required. Councillor Archibald welcomed input across the Chamber and advised that all Members would be kept up-to-date on this serious matter by email.

Councillor Archibald gave a brief summary of discussions which had taken place over the last three weeks relative to devolution.

Councillor Archibald prefaced his remarks by saying how much he welcomed the Government's determination to level up the north, and give it more focus. He stated that he looked forward to everyone working together to achieve that goal.

About three weeks ago, Councillor Archibald had been asked to attend a meeting with the other Cumbrian district leaders, the Leader of the County Council and Jake Berry, the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse. The announced purpose of this meeting had been to discuss devolution.

Prior to that meeting, the six district leaders and chief executives had got together to discuss their common understanding of the possible options for devolution, and to see whether they could coalesce around an agreed set of talking points. In this pre-meeting, there had been several fundamental understandings:-

- (1) a combined authority with some sort of mayor would be needed for devolution;
- (2) functioning economic areas would be the basis for mayoral authorities;
- (3) should the wish be to consider reorganisation, new unitaries would have to contain over 300,000 people; and
- (4) reorganisation under current regulation required consent of all parties.

Councillor Archibald also added that, in his mind, there was an underlying assumption that Government would deliver on its promise to fix the social care crisis as the Prime Minister had promised that, "we will fix social care with a clear plan that we have prepared."

District leaders had quickly come to an agreement that they would be very willing to talk about devolution and to listen to what might be on offer for their residents. They had also agreed that, ideally, the area should be greater than Cumbria and consideration should be given as to how to encompass Lancaster and potentially more of Lancashire. They had not been in favour of restructuring, as that did not seem to be necessary for devolution, was not obvious for Cumbria, and would cause significant disruption.

District leaders had then been joined by Jake Berry MP and Councillor Stewart Young, Leader of Cumbria County Council. Jake Berry MP had confirmed that, without a mayor, there would be no extra money. He had gone on to say that a single unitary Cumbria would not qualify for a mayor and was, therefore, not in his current thoughts. He had indicated that devolution might bring an additional £10 million per year to the whole County, and that there might be more control for example over spatial planning and bus licensing. Combining Health and Social care was not on offer.

After discussion, Jake Berry MP had suggested a point of view which somewhat conflicted with district leaders' initial representations. Jake Berry MP had suggested that, to achieve a devolution deal, all would have to consider:-

- (1) reorganising into two unitaries. Potentially one could be composed of Barrow and South Lakeland – this was well below the 300,000 threshold - indeed close to half of it;
- (2) the idea that Social Care and Children's Services would not be split but would be managed by a trust; and
- (3) electing a mayor for Cumbria.

Jake Berry MP had added that he would not prejudge a combined authority based on Lancaster, Barrow and South Lakeland, but would need to see the detail.

It was agreed to continue the discussion at a later date with Jake Berry MP's civil servants. There was certainly no agreement on the day.

Following the meeting, which had been assumed to be semi-private, Councillor Archibald had been confronted with detailed narratives of the conclusion of the meeting which bore only passing resemblance to what had actually been agreed - which was to continue talking.

Following the meeting, there had been an exchange in the House of Lords (on 11 February 2020) where the Minister in the Lords had seemed to confirm the 300,000 person limit, which was, of course, important to Cumbria as a county that has a less than 500,000 population.

Councillor Archibald had attended the District Council Network Annual Conference and there had been surprise expressed by many in attendance, and within the Local Government Association, at the proposals, particularly relating to Social Care, but also in relation to the lack of distance between two unitaries and one mayor. The possible breaching of the 300,000 limit had also been greeted with disbelief given prior government statements.

Since that time Jake Berry MP was no longer the Northern Powerhouse Minister. Simon Clarke MP had been appointed a Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with responsibility for levelling up. We are trying to get a meeting with him as soon as possible. Grant Shaps, the Secretary of State for Transport, was the Northern powerhouse spokesperson around the Government's Cabinet table.

Councillor Archibald closed, saying that this left us willing to talk and happy to entertain any proposals that clearly benefitted our communities.

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

From Councillor Susanne Long to Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder – *“Please explain what circumstances lead to children living in poverty and how your portfolio is tackling this issue in South Lakeland – thank you.”*

Councillor Pye responded, informing Members that, when looking at national poverty figures, South Lakeland fared better than most in the UK. However, she pointed out that, in amongst the apparent affluence there were pockets of deprivation, with 23% of children in South Lakeland living in poverty, meaning that they could be missing out on opportunities available to other children. Councillor Pye said that she had asked South Lakes Citizens' Advice and Kings Food Bank for their views on why 23% of children in South Lakeland were living in poverty. The reasons suggested by Citizens' Advice were around Universal Credit, high private rental properties, poor employment practice, mental health issues, debt, low wages, addiction and relationship breakdown. Kings Food Bank had explained that they did not always receive a reason for the referral from Children's Services, however that the number of referrals had increased over the last 12 months. Kings Food Bank had also said that the benefit system, including Universal Credit, also continued to have an impact. They had also made the observation that the reason for referrals from another source would indicate that people had sufficient income to pay rent and priority bills but did not have further disposable income to buy food. All these things considered, Councillor Pye advised Members that the Council was working hard to help people in South Lakeland become more financially resilient, firstly by helping people currently struggling financially and secondly by working to prevent people from falling into future poverty.

Councillor Pye informed Members about two projects which she was working on at the moment, both of which specifically addressed child poverty. She had been working with five primary schools in Kendal, to put together provision for children who were eligible for Free School Meals, so that they had access to food in the school holidays. Kendal Leisure Centre had, during the recent half term, run activity days on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and a place had been offered to every child on Free School Meals from a number of schools in the Kendal. The People's café had generously given their time to provide packed lunches for all these children, from food that would otherwise have gone to waste. Over the four days, 76 meals had been provided, and 26 individual children had been reached. Councillor Pye took the opportunity to thank the staff at the Leisure Centre, the volunteers at the People's Café, and the Council's own officers, for all the effort that had gone into this pilot scheme. The experience gained would be used to work towards a similar scheme at Easter time, with the vision being that every disadvantaged child would have access to nutritious meals in the school holidays. The second project involved working with secondary schools to look at delivering high quality, engaging, budgeting and money advice to sixth form students, by training existing teachers to enable schools to improve their current curriculum, ensuring longevity of any programme put in place. Councillor Pye highlighted the fact that the world was vastly different now to how it was when she had left school. There as now a plethora of banks and companies vying to loan money to children. There were now more ways to invest, more ways to save, but also more ways to get into debt, which was the very thing to be avoided. Councillor Pye raised the importance of trying to produce a generation which was more financially resilient. Councillor Pye emphasised the fact that the alleviation of poverty, especially child poverty, should never be a partisan subject, and she welcomed conversations with Members from all sides about issues and projects both generally and specific to their wards.

Councillor Pye concluded, drawing attention to some other ways in which the Council was helping people in poverty, for example with its Council Tax Reduction Scheme, supporting Cumbria Action for Sustainability, helping to fund projects such as the Springfield Women's Refuge and the provision of funding towards an initiative in Staveley to provide an opportunity for children to learn a musical instrument. Councillor Pye thanked Councillors Pat Bell and Hazel Hodgson for also contributing a portion of their local budgets to this project. Councillor Pye also referred to work being

carried out South Lakes Citizens Advice to look at ways of reaching people in outlying communities in order to tackle rural poverty. The Authority was improving how it communicated information about the existing help that was available to people, both from the Council and partner organisations. The Council was also working with partners to prevent some of the underlying causes of poverty.

The written question having been presented and answered, the following verbal questions were taken from the floor:-

Councillor Matt Severn asked Councillor Jonathan Brook, Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder, to provide an update on the latest progress towards the Council achieving its target for 1,000 affordable homes for rent for local families in South Lakeland.

Councillor Brook responded, referring to figures which had been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2020. The Council had enabled 468 affordable homes for rent since January 2014. These homes continued to be delivered, with the Council being on track to reach the target of 1,000 by 2025. Councillor Brook informed Members that he was due to meet with the Principal Specialist People later in the week to discuss the delivery programme and hoped soon to be in a position to announce delivery of the 500th home.

Councillor Vicky Hughes referred to the good work being carried out in Ambleside with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) and to Grasmere's pledge to become plastic free and asked Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder, what else was planned for Ambleside.

Councillor Jones explained to Members that business owners in Grasmere had indicated that they wished to work towards Grasmere becoming a single-use plastic free town. She referred to the Incredible Edible team in Ambleside and action days attended by influential speakers. She referred to Ambleside and the goal of its sustainability organisation, CAfS, for the town to become carbon neutral and to the commitment which was required from the community. She explained that it was due to the Council's financial backing that CAfS were able to work with Ambleside and thus discover what working towards becoming carbon neutral may look like. It involved working with a wide range of partners to develop a plan; it involved training; and it would take action to deliver these plans. In order to establish Ambleside's carbon footprint, CAfS had arranged for a team of specialists to produce a very high-level carbon footprint covering both residents and businesses in Ambleside. This work was soon due to be completed. The carbon footprint survey would provide a high-level measure for strategic planning, but recognised that individuals needed to understand what their own carbon footprint was in order to inform their decisions on ways to reduce it. There was a high number of hospitality businesses in Ambleside, and CAfS were looking into ways to assess online options for hospitality businesses. They were also looking at opportunities for generating renewable energy in the town. Potential roof space had been mapped, looking for suitability for fitting PV panels, with software development having been commissioned to map PV potential. All of this led to a whole-place approach and examination of different models for community energy. There were also investigations into whether an existing hydro scheme near Ambleside could provide the town with energy; the challenge was that the existing regulatory framework for electricity supply was not compatible with small-scale energy schemes. Councillor Jones felt it exciting that CAfS would go on to create the basis or template for a whole-place approach that they could then roll out, and this was something fully supported by the Council. Councillor Jones was proud that the Council was helping to make this happen.

Councillor Philip Dixon referred to a recent article in the press on Airbnb in which Councillor Jonathan Brook, Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder, had been quoted. Councillor Dixon asked Councillor Brook if he could provide assurance that the Council would take the issue of the increase Airbnb activity, a hidden menace, seriously.

Councillor Brook referred to the article in the Guardian Newspaper which had suggested that there were 19 Airbnb listings per 100 properties in the area of Windermere North, Ambleside and Langdales. He explained that he had said that he did not object to people renting out their homes on a short-term basis as this could be argued as making a contribution to the viability of the local community. He had, however, added that where properties were exclusively being used as such, then these should be regulated. He had further explained that there was evidence that properties were being purchased for Airbnb lettings in areas and housing estates that would not previously have appealed to the rental sector. Councillor Brook believed that these properties represented an additional layer on second/holiday homes. He said that he would be raising the issue with officers and MPs and through discussions with other councils in order to seek regulation of Airbnb. He thought that the practice of seeking to avoid the costs incurred by normal bed and breakfasts businesses was inappropriate and unfair and undertook to aim to ensure that this was addressed by the Council.

Councillor Ben Berry referred to the information provided earlier in the meeting about families in poverty in South Lakeland asked Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder, if she thought that those families would welcome the decisions taken earlier in the meeting regarding an increase in the allowances paid to Members of South Lakeland District Council and an increase in Council Tax.

Councillor Pye undertook to provide a written response.

C/75 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

No comments or questions had been received in respect of the minutes of committee meetings held between 4 November 2019 and 10 January 2020.

C/76 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR CHAIRMAN OF ANY COMMITTEE OR SUB-COMMITTEE

No questions had been received under this item.

C/77 URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent Executive Decisions had been taken since that last meeting of the Council on 17 December 2019.

The meeting ended at 9.17 p.m.