

South Lakeland District Council
Council
Tuesday, 30 May 2020
Customer, Commercial Services and People
Portfolio

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To work with all Members, the community and organisations in developing and implementing locality working, case management, and specialist services as part of the Council's Customer connect programme.

Delivery of the Council Plan objectives in relation to quality of service and high performance culture.

The organisation of the Authority relating to the Council's central services, including Employee relations.

Providing and maintaining parks infrastructure.

Polices, plans and strategies

- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Customer Charter and Contact Strategy
- Member Development and Training Plan
- Workforce Plan (to be reviewed under customer connect programme)

Key Areas

- Customer services (operational)
- Car Parking (operations)
- Waste Management (operations and service optimisation)
- Street scene
- Member Services
- Member Training and Development
- Legal and Committee Services and HR Services
- Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)
- Corporate Health and Safety

Customer services (operational)

The transformation programme, Customer Connect remains on track to deliver better access to services for customers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will create more opportunities to self-serve through improved digital options.

Customer and Commercial Services are undergoing transition as part of phase 2 of the Customer Connect project which was delayed due to Covid-19. The enhanced delivery of new capabilities within the authority will improve the service and experience delivered to customers and staff.

Over 600 core service processes had been identified across the organisation and a significant number of minor processes. The work of the service redesign is continuing to focus on the areas where there is the biggest opportunity to improve, by prioritising the core processes based on customer impact, volume and customer efficiency. The areas with the biggest opportunities were identified as the main focus for the redesign process. This task is ongoing and increased access to digitally enabled services will be rolled out during 2020, including 'My Account.'

A number of self-service process are now live on the Councils website such as Compliments, Comments and Complaints and reporting of fly tipping or abandoned vehicles.

Car parking (operations)

Working collaboratively with the Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio the Council is seeking ways to increase car parking capacity within the areas of highest demand.

The Council offered free car parking in Council owned car parks every Sunday in December to attract both visitors and residents into local towns supporting the local economy.

In July 2019 the Parking Services team was highly commended for best practise in finance and statistics reporting at the Parking Annual Report Awards by Councils awards (PATROL PARC). The category in which the team was nominated acknowledges high-quality in the transparency of reports and the presentation of statistics and recognises the hard work from all employees within the parking services team.

From 25 March until 15 June during the peak of Coronavirus, all SLDC operated car parks were free to use to ensure key workers and volunteers involved in the emergency response could access free parking and to minimise the risk of virus transmission. Following the reintroduction of charging in SLDC operated car parks, safety measures have been installed to slow the spread of the virus through social distancing and contactless card payments or pay by phone are encouraged.

Waste Management (operations and service optimisation) and Street scene

Throughout 2019/20 the Customer and Commercial Services and Climate Emergency and Localism portfolios have been working in partnership to support the waste management and street scene functions.

Throughout the year there has been numerous social media messages to promote recycling and waste minimisation during recent months, supporting the Councils green initiative. The December edition South Lakeland News included significant content regarding waste and recycling.

As reported in partnership with the Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio the Waste and Recycling crews collected an increased amount of recycling tonnage over the week commencing 6 January 2020. The collected tonnage of recyclables increased to 194 tonnes compared to 182 tonnes collected over the same period in 2019.

The street cleansing service has trialled 2 electric vehicles, however in both cases the daily operational mileage exceeded the range of the vehicle. The service is continuing to monitor new vehicle technologies, particularly with regard to alternative fuels. Drivers are encouraged to turn off their engines when in stalled traffic.

Most recently the decision was taken to extend suspension of green waste collections during January and February 2021, as part of the Councils action to addressing Climate Change. Statistics supported that the quantity of green waste collections is much lower compared to other times of the year, and the Councils collection fleet use significant quantities of fuel to make collections at each household every other week. During the January and early February period the vehicles will be off the road every other week, as there will be alternate weekly grey bin collections, this will therefore create a 50% reduction in the carbon footprint of collection vehicles during this period.

In January 2020 the Council supported a joint operation with Cumbria Constabulary and the DVLA to take enforcement action on untaxed and abandoned vehicles. Over the past year over 300 reports of abandoned vehicles were received by the Council and the operation supported enforcement actions to be taken against 30 vehicles in Kendal, Milnthorpe, Staveley, Windermere and Ambleside.

In response to Coronavirus the Council introduced monthly collections of green waste across the District throughout May and June 2020. This was undertaken in response to reduced staffing levels due to Coronavirus and to ensure crews could work safely and comply with social distancing guidelines.

The Council also made sure that all available vehicles were on the road each day and loaned vehicles from other authorities to continue with the scheduled grey waste and recycling collections. With the increased number of people working from home the Council has seen a significant increase in recycling tonnages collected.

Member Services and Member Training and Development

The 2019/20 training plan has offered a variety of training opportunities available for members. Examples of the training available include:

- Social Media and Web skills
- Digital Skills Workshop
- Introduction to Your Ward
- Committee Inductions
- GDPR, FOI and Data Management
- Chairing Committee Skills
- Submitting Member Expenses Online

Feedback on the training provided has been extremely positive. Member Services are continuing to encourage members to receive committee papers electronically through the use of corporate IT kit. Corporate kit allows members to access council used systems such as Skype for Business, Mod Gov and SharePoint which support the Customer Connect Programme and GDPR regulations. In total 42 out of 51 members now use SLDC corporate kit.

The Member Support Steering Group (MSSG) had trialled the Local Government Association Councillor E-Learning Package to allow Members to undertake training remotely. The feedback received to date has been positive and it has been circulated to all members with corporate kit. The MSSG are working towards achieving the Level 2 North West Employers to coincide with the Customer Connect Programme.

The Coronavirus has explored the Councils capabilities to use technology to conduct meetings and keep connected. All Councillors have been given access to new equipment and training on Microsoft Teams. This new virtual platform has allowed members to take part in virtual meetings internally and externally.

Legal and Committee Services and HR Services

The new report writing system has been fully embedded across the organisation. Officers can write, share and submit reports digitally using the system and introduces a more effective tracking method for all committees.

Legal Services are working effectively reducing debts and being proactive in taking the appropriate action. Encroachment debts have been reduced by 25% since October 2019. Work continues to prioritise the completion of S106 agreements. The establishment of a commercial team to work across the Council on developments and agreements is proving beneficial. Many complex agreements are being negotiated and concluded and the Councils numerous grant schemes are supported by the service. The legal team have been busy with contract work and litigation. A new legal case management system will be procured shortly this will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the team. The team continue to support the smooth operation of the Councils decision making process.

The HR team has continuing to be heavily involved in supporting the Customer Connect Project in terms of people, change and transition work streams in phases 1 and 2. The HR team have supported managers in conducting competency based interview, managing change, building resilience training, drop in sessions for all employees and transition in phases 1 and 2.

The roles appointed in Phase 1 of the Customer Connect Project became effective from 1 April for the Leadership Team and 1 May 2019 for all other Phase 1 appointments. 95 Competency based interviews were conducted over a 3 week period in Phase 1, who have now completed the transition phase.

Within phase 2 192 competency based interviews were conducted over a 9 week period. The appointment of roles and transition phase became effective from 1 January 2020.

The introduction of new a technology platform (Microsoft Teams) has enabled the Council to continue with the recruitment process via virtual interviews during Covid-19.

Due to Coronavirus, in May 2020 the Council hosted its first ever virtual meeting. All face to face meeting were suspended following Government advice, however the Council was able to use emergency decision making powers to continue its business.

However, as a result of ongoing spread of the virus, government amended legislation to permit virtual committee meetings. Since the change the legislation the Council has been able to host virtual Cabinet, Planning, Council and Licensing Committee meetings using Microsoft Teams. This platform allowed the public to watch live streams of the meetings and participate where appropriate.

Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy identifies the importance of good quality green spaces throughout the district. The strategy is designed to providing clear direction for the management of council owned parks and open spaces over ten years. The strategy is reviewing the day to day maintenance and identifying improvements to parks and open spaces through working in partnership with communities, local businesses and partners. The strategy has incorporated a variety of different spaces including parks, sports fields, trees and woodlands and cemeteries.

In 2019 Rayrigg Meadow Playground on the shores of Lake Windermere was accredited with a Bronze award for its commitment to inclusivity. The playground met the minimum requirements of good accessibility throughout the play space, provision for at least three senses to be accessed from a seating or standing position and an opportunity for all children to use their 'whole bodies' in dynamic play through sliding, climbing, spinning or swinging. As the playground enhances progresses it is hope that a silver award will be achieved in 2020.

In May 2019 new playgrounds were opened at Millerground, Rayrigg Meadow, Yew Tree Playing Fields and Maryfell, Sedbergh. All the works undertaken at each park were completed by working in collaboration with community groups and have been designed to be inclusive and provide capital investment for 20 years.

Following a £125,000 investment and funding raised with the Friends of Abbot Hall Playground the Abbot Hall playground has been revamped. An opening ceremony took place on 1 September 2019 for families and included activities such as face painting.

The Council has been working with the Village Society to secure the work plan for the improvements at Broadgate children's playground in Grasmere following a £90,000 investment. The playground has been installed however currently the contractors have left site temporarily due to the weather conditions.

£20,000 of funding has been secured from the National Lottery for park improvements at North Lonsdale Road, Ulverston. Funding raising is still ongoing and a consultation event was held in October 2019. Three large bids have been submitted which will be announced in March and May. Subject to the outcome of the bid applications the Council aim to begin the tender process in summer 2020.

The Beckside Community Centre have raised £10,000 towards an outdoor fitness trail which will incorporate outdoor gym equipment and a waymarked route linking local playgrounds and green spaces to encourage healthier lifestyles. A consultation with residents was completed in October 2019 and demonstrated support from local residents for small groups of outdoor gym equipment in the large area of open space close to the Beckside Community Centre. The deadline for tender submissions closed on 18 December 2019 and an evaluation took place in January 2020. The tender process has now been completed, the contract is currently being reviewed by legal services. Work is estimated to commence mid-march and be available for use by Easter.

In 2019 the Council contacted parish and town councils across the district to invite proposals for tree planting sites. In total six parish council owned sites have been secured with a total of 36 trees to be planted across the sites, planting which began in January 2020.

The Parish tree planting letter sent out also identified locations to plant 55 trees on SLDC owned land, 8 trees on LDNPA owned land and 9 trees on private land adjacent to publically accessible areas. In total the Parish Tree Planting Letter has identified 173 tree planting

locations. The scheme in Ford Park in Ulverston will create a new Arboretum and community orchard when 65 trees are planted.

In partnership with leisure providers GLL, the Council supporting the promotion of leisure facilities available in Windermere, Ulverston and Kendal. These have included opportunities such as outdoor swimming lessons for children, health check days for over 55's and workplace sport tournaments.

Corporate Health and Safety

Throughout 2019/20 the Council has been using the Health and Safety Strategic Improvement Plan to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of staff is continuously improved. This plan is continuing to be regularly reviewed at the Councils Internal Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meet on a quarterly basis. Each quarter a safety summary is presented to the committee to outline the accident data, what is affecting the Council, what the Council is doing well and methods to improve.

Following consideration by the committee it was agreed to undertake a review of the Councils Safety Management System. Usage showed that the reporting platform Safety Cloud was not well used due to the difficulty navigating the system. Following a review an improved, simplified system has been rolled out across the authority. The system had been broken down into new areas containing appropriate sub sections in line with team requirements which would support monthly checklists.

In partnership with the review of the reporting platform a review of generic policies and risk assessments had taken place to reduce the high level of duplication. Generic risk assessments relating to South Lakeland House are now available under a single sub section of the system. Areas of specialism assessments such as Town Fields Hostel or Streetscene will be available in specific service area policies.

The authority is currently undertaking a review of the risk assessments associated with Town View Fields Hostel. New working arrangements and rota have been introduced and violence and aggression training has been scheduled to better support staff.

The Council's Health and Safety Reach for Zero campaign has been promoted throughout the authority to ensure that all staff regularly complete Desk Assessments and are aware of the reporting methods should a health and safety risk occur. Health and Safety Training will also be embedded in new training plans for staff as part of the Customer Connect Programme.

A key issue was raised by employees working in the street scene department regarding their safety when working on a highway to empty waste bins and recycling boxes. Dangerous manoeuvres by motorists puts staff at risk of injury, therefore the service had introduced new signage on the waste collection vehicles to make drivers aware of personnel working in the vicinity of vehicles as well as using other communication tools such as South Lakeland News to highlight the risks imposed by dangerous manoeuvres to residents. Most recently approval had been sought to undertake a survey with Streetscene to obtain feedback on the Health and Safety culture and to look at ways of improved workplace safety engagement techniques.

The Annual Health and Safety Report was approved by Cabinet in November 2019. The report provided an overview of the Councils actions in relation to Health, Safety and Wellbeing through 2018/19. A key highlight within the annual report is that a total of 30

accidents were reported which supported the continuing the trend of a low number of accidents.

As reported in the Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder Report, the Council closed its assets to the Public during the peak of Coronavirus. Since further government advice has been issued the Council has installed protective and preventative measures to reopen its assets which protect staff and communities. Measures include markings to adhere to social distancing, protective screens, sanitising facilities and staff continuing to work from home where possible.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing of SLDC employees is key and all employees working within the community have been provided with the appropriate PPE and guidance to slow the spread of the virus i.e. Collection Crews, Locality Officers and Cash Collectors. The organisation is also sharing internal messages, using the hashtag #Togetherwecan, to share home working experiences and helpful hints and tips.