

South Lakeland District Council
Council
Tuesday, 30 June 2020
Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio

Portfolio: Cllr Giles Archibald

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Working with partners and stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sector, at national, regional and sub-regional level. To act as an ambassador and advocate for the Communities of South Lakeland.

To represent the Council on local and other strategic partnerships including nominated representative on the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership as appropriate.

Delivery of the Council Plan objectives in collaboration with Portfolio Holders

Policies, Plans and Strategies

- Communications Strategy
- Emergency Plan
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Performance Management

Key Areas

- Community strategy/area planning/development of recovery group
- Emergency Planning
- Local and Cumbria Wide Strategic Partnerships
- Media and Communications
- Performance Management
- Relationships with Government Departments, and other relevant authorities at a sub-regional, regional and national level

Community strategy/area planning/development of recovery group

The Council has been working in close partnership with the Environment Agency (EA) to develop and implement Phase 1 of the Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme plans to adapt the local infrastructure in order to protect communities against the risks associated with Climate Change. Phase 1 of the scheme will deliver an appreciable net gain in biodiversity. In December 2019 Cabinet approved that more than 1,000 trees will be planted on council-owned land as part of the tree replacement required to implement the Flood Management Scheme. The EA have committed to planting at least 1,058 replacement trees on Council owned land in compensation of around 106 trees to be removed from Council land.

The EA have continued to undertake investigations in preparation for the works commencing where possible during Covid-19 whilst adhering to social distancing and sanitation rules however, some works have been had to be postponed and therefore SLDC and EA will be seeking approval from MHCLG to extend the funding guidelines.

The Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) is continuing to be used to support planning applications. The DPD now includes guidance policies on flood risk management, key infrastructure, open spaces, trees and landscaping and has shown to be every effective.

Emergency Planning

South Lakeland District Council has been continuing to support Community Resilience Groups to ensure at the earliest opportunity, they receive situational awareness information where possible prior to the emergency. The Council played an active role as an emergency coordinator in the most recent storms as well as throughout the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Council has supported the work of the Resilience Unit to provide a new online facility called 'Support Cumbria'. 'Support Cumbria' will allow Community Resilience Groups to upload their emergency plans and update their contact details. Also significantly 'Support Cumbria' will also allow the public and organisations to register offers of support and goods - following a crisis the public can be directed to this site to register their offers of support.

Business Continuity Planning was undertaken ahead of the EU-Exit date on 31 January in preparation. Following this effective work South Lakeland District Council is as well prepared as it can be for Brexit, recognising that there are enormous uncertainties about the timing, scale and wider impacts of what will be an immense and unpredictable change for the country as a whole and we will continue to work closely with partners to ensure that as far as possible, adverse impacts on the district are minimised, and favourable impacts are maximised.

Critical services across the Council were involved in identifying potential risks faced with Brexit and potential mitigations where possible. Along with other Local Authorities the Council escalated potential issues to MHCLG.

Working with the relevant portfolio holders, the council has been monitoring very closely the crisis relating to COVID -19. We have been liaising with the County Council, hospitals and other appropriate public bodies to monitor the impact the virus has had on our communities and responded through the creation of a Recovery Hospital at Kendal Leisure Centre, the re-design of Town Centres to stop the spread of the virus, the distribution of Business Support Grants, support for the Community Resilience helpline and distribution of food parcels and medication to vulnerable people across the District. The Council is also making appropriate

preparations to conduct the Test and Trace initiative as well support the Health and Safety Executive by providing guidance for businesses to re-open and operate in a safe manner.

The Council has kept District and Town and Parish Councillors regularly updated on its actions, ways in which they can support communities as well as guidance for protecting their communities and reopening of valued assets.

At the peak of the virus and in line with Government Guidance the Council closed its assets to the public and encouraged its staff to work from home where possible. Those in role which cannot be undertaken from home were provided with the appropriate PPE and sanitation facilities and worked in way that adhered to social distancing. Appropriate measures have now been installed that have allowed the Council to reopen its facilities to the public.

Local and Cumbria Wide Strategic Partnerships

Throughout 2019/20 the Council has been continuing to develop the Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Region to increase economic prosperity across the Morecambe Bay footprint. The three Councils have engaged with Cumbria and Lancashire LEP's, as well as County Councils to shape and influence the economic influence of the Bay area.

This work has resulted in the creation of a joint committee between the three authorities known as the Lancaster and South Cumbria Joint Committee. This Joint Committee will reinforce the importance of developing the economic prosperity and provide political and democratic accountability in doing so.

A growth bid for the area is currently being formulated and the hope is that we will have the opportunity to discuss this topic with government.

The three authorities also met with Andy Burnham to discuss our aspirations and seek his support and influence in driving the initiative forward. He offered guidance in collating the growth bid and agreed to support the group moving forward.

I have been attending the Cumbria Leaders Board (CLB) and Joint Districts Board to discuss the key issues across Cumbria and seek partnership working to implement resolutions. I was appointed as Chairman of the CLB in June 2020. Moving forward I propose to shape the CLB agenda to become increasingly focused on strategic issues of importance to residents of the county such as climate change, racial discrimination, housing, wellbeing and devolution and aligning it with the Cumbria Chief Executives agenda.

A Climate Change Sub Group has been created which is looking at the actions Cumbria can take as a whole to reduce the effects of climate change which the Cumbria Leaders will feed into and drive forward. The group sets out the carbon footprint of Cumbria, and various alternative pathways to net zero carbon. I and the Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder met the Deputy Chairman of Lake District National Park to discuss biodiversity and ways of enhancing and encouraging this across the district. As reported in the Climate Emergency and Localism report, the Councils biodiversity policy aims to enhance biodiversity across this district to reduce carbon emissions and increase the diversity of plant species benefitting local wildlife and the wider environment to diversify local landscape value.

Following my appointment to the District Council Network Members Board, I have taken on the role of 'Lead' of the 'Better lives' work stream. The group is focused on influencing government policy around the plight of the vulnerable and in particular in relation to housing matters.

Working in partnership with Cllr Dyan Jones in her portfolio responsibilities for Localism, myself, the Deputy Leader and other Cabinet Members met with a number of Town and Parish Councils to identify ways of effective collaborative working, for example installation of signage for pedestrians and cyclists along Grange Promenade and the management of own street lights. Throughout the Covid-19, we have been in regular contact with representatives from Town and Parish Councils which have been effective in information sharing, gathering local intelligence and sharing innovative ideas to develop communities.

Media and Communications

Council has been keeping residents and stakeholders updated of the council's activities through a range of communication channels i.e. Social Media, Newspaper, and Website. Consistent communication messages through these channels have proven very effective throughout the past year. For example regular messages have encouraged residents to get involved in consultations and drop in sessions to help shape the future of South Lakeland such as Climate Conversations and the review of the Local Plan.

Most recently the Communication Team have been using a variety of methods to regularly update Residents, Partners and Councillors on how the Council is supporting communities through Covid-19 and variety of support mechanisms available for businesses, families, communities and vulnerable people. A specific webpage has been set up on the Councils website where all advice and support relating to Coronavirus can be accessed easily.

[\(Click here\).](#)

South Lakeland News is distributed to each household with South Lakeland, covering around 52,000 properties. The December edition of South Lakeland news emphasised the impacts of Climate Change and encouraged to residents to recycle. There was also an inclusion to warn drivers of the dangers of passing collection vehicles in an unsafe manner which had been raised as a high impact Health and Safety concern. Due to the Coronavirus outbreak the spring edition of South Lakeland News was postponed and therefore will be distributed in July 2020.

The Communications Team have circulated regular internal messages relating to Customer Connect via the internal Intranet page, which is accessed by employees and Councillors. These messages provided updates and information on the ongoing programme progress, the types of training available, support opportunities and organisational role changes. Blogs are also uploaded by members of the Leadership Team which explain about new team roles and responsibilities and their experiences. A Blog is also circulated by Service Redesign to keep employees updated with progress and implementation of new systems and ways of working.

As the Customer Connect Programme continues to transition, customers and Stakeholders will be keep updated through external communication channels on the introduction of new areas which will enhance customer's access to Council Services, i.e. access to online payments, 24 hour access to services etc.

Performance Management

The Performance Management throughout 2019/20 had been focusing on the Council Plan measures of success to monitor progress towards the priorities for South Lakeland.

In Quarter 4 the measures reported showed very good performance, demonstrating that South Lakeland is a desirable place to live, work and explore.

Business start-ups in South Lakeland were the highest in Cumbria for 2018/19 at 88.8 per 10,000 working age residents.

The Council is on target to achieve 1,000 new jobs in the area by 2025. Since 1 January 2014 a total of 629 new jobs have been created within the District.

For 2018 the median income in South Lakeland was the highest compared to the other Districts within Cumbria at £34,706 (Figures for 2019 will be available in Q1).

The Council is on target to deliver the 1,000 new affordable homes for rent by 2025 with a cumulative total of 498 since 01/01/14.

The number of long term empty homes has fluctuated throughout 2019/20 however, the overall the overall number from 1,079 in 2011 has reduced to 987 in 2018. Since 2015 the Council has undertaken targeted interventions to bring 395 empty homes back into use.

At Q4 2019/20 the figures of the number of households living in temporary accommodation had increased to 27 however, these increasing figures are in line with national trends and Covid-019 has been of influence.

For 2018/19 the total carbon emitted was 2,996 tonnes, which is a reduction of 166 tonnes from 3,162 tonnes at 31 March 2015.

Life Expectancy in South Lakeland is higher than the UK's average at 85.0 years for women (UK 83.1) and 82.2 years for men (UK 79.6).

The amount of residual waste (Grey Bin) per household per year has reduced from 479kg in 2009/10 to 389kg in 2018/19.

The Council Plan performance measures are reported on a quarterly basis and all statistics are readily available to view and compare via the Councils website.

Relationships with Government Departments, and other relevant authorities at a sub-regional, regional and national level

The Council has raised concerns to government offices and other relevant authorities surrounding the issues that cause difficulties for the district.

Most recently we have been encouraging Government to extend offers to support available for families experiencing financial hardship caused by the Coronavirus. As such the Council worked with Districts across Cumbria to implement a Discretionary Grant Scheme and a Council Tax Hardship Scheme.

In July 2019 I wrote to government ministers highlighting the positive work the authority is undertaking in order to reduce the impacts of climate change. The letter requested that government reviews Part L of the Building Regulations to encourage all new developments to be zero carbon. It should also make clear that national housebuilders should be reviewing their standard house types now. I received a response from Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP in August 2019 recognising that the Government need to take further action against climate change.

In collaboration with other Cumbria District Leaders we wrote to the Leader of Cumbria County Council to express our concerns surrounding the proposed reduction of supporting people funding. Following this effective collaboration the County Council have agreed to continue the funding.

These letters are available for Councillors to view upon request should they wish to see copies.

As leader, I met with the Director of the Northern Powerhouse on a couple of occasions, alongside the Leaders and Chief Executives from the other three authorities to discuss the Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Region and recognised support methods in moving forward.

In February 2020, the three Leaders of the Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Partnership wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to inform him of our ambitions to develop the potential of our functioning economic area and would welcome consideration within the budget to explore further 'Growth Deals' to deliver sustainable growth.

In February 2020 I attended the DCN Annual Conference where discussions were held about the uncertain long term financial settlements for councils and the difficulty of working within the current unclear future funding framework. There were also discussions around devolution deals and the importance of the role of district councils, particularly in rural areas, was emphasised.

I met with the other Cumbrian district leaders, Leader of the County Council and Jake Berry, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse to discuss devolution.

Prior to the 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.

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.

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.

Since this meeting Jake Berry MP is no longer the Northern Powerhouse Minister. The same group (myself included) met with senior civil servants who appeared to outline a different approach Jake Berry. Simon Clarke MP has 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.