

**SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of the proceedings at a virtual meeting of the Council held on Tuesday, 28 July 2020, at 6.30 p.m.

**Present****Councillors**

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jonathan Brook, Helen Chaffey, Chris Hogg and Rachael Hogg.

**Officers**

Tom Benson	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
Inge Booth	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
Gareth Candlin	Operational Lead Specialist Services
Lawrence Conway	Chief Executive
Linda Fisher	Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)
Julie Jackson	Principal Specialist People
Simon McVey	Operational Lead Support Services
Fraser Robertson	Communications 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/21****MINUTES**

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

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 June 2020.

**C/22 EMERGENCY NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

In response to a query as to why the exempt documents in relation to the reports had not been included within the agenda provided to Members, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) explained that these reports had been circulated to the decision makers as necessary in line with the “need to know” principle.

In relation to Agenda Item No. 2(b) (012 07-07-Management Agreement for Braithwaite Fold Caravan Park), Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, explained that this decision had simply been with regard to the continuation of the existing Management Agreement for the time being in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

RESOLVED – That

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

(a) 011 21-05-20 HR Flexible Retirement 03-2020; and

(b) 012 07-07-20 Management Agreement for Braithwaite Fold Caravan Park; and

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

**C/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No questions, representations, deputations or petitions had been received from members of the public in respect of this meeting.

**C/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

RESOLVED – That it be noted that:-

(1) in relation to Agenda Item No. 12 regarding Planning Committee Membership (Minute C/32 below), the Monitoring Officer and Independent Member have agreed that all Members of the Planning Committee be provided dispensation on the grounds that they consider that, without the dispensation, the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular matter would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business;

(2) Councillors Brian Cooper, Tom Harvey and John Holmes have raised with the Monitoring Officer, for the purpose of transparency, the fact that they are involved with organisations that have applied for discretionary grants as referred to at Agenda Item No. 18(a) regarding emergency delegated executive decisions which have already been made and on the agenda for noting (Minute C/39 below);

(3) in respect of Agenda Item No. 11 (Minute C/21 below), Councillors John Holmes and Susanne Long declared non-pecuniary interests by virtue of being Directors on the Board of South Lakes Housing, and Councillor Suzie Pye, for the purpose of transparency, explained that she was a tenant of South Lakes Housing and had been through the Choice Based Lettings process.

**C/25 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS**

There were no excluded items on the agenda.

**C/26 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman explained that he had not attended any events since the last meeting of Council. He took the opportunity, however, on behalf of the Council, to express thanks to staff for their work during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite huge disruption to everyone's day to day lives, staff had shown great dedication in maintaining local services during this difficult time.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to an urgent item of business regarding the need for Council to consider policy and procedures to meet legislative requirements relating to the Business and Planning Act 2020 – Pavement Licence Policy. He had agreed to the inclusion of this item in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act due to the need for consideration without delay following the Bill having recently receive Royal Assent. The report had been sent to all Members and published on the Council's Website on 24 July 2020.

**C/27 UPDATE ON APPOINTMENTS**

Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, echoed the sentiments expressed by the Chairman in thanking officers for all they had been doing throughout the pandemic. This had been an extraordinary effort by all.

Councillor Archibald was sad to announce that Councillor Eric Morrell had informed him and officers that this would be his last Council meeting and that he would be resigning from the Authority at the end of the month. Eric had been a past, even-handed Chairman of the Council and also a terrific Cabinet Member. Councillor Archibald, however, understood Eric's decision to step down and he offered Eric his heartfelt thanks for his public service.

Councillor Tom Harvey, Leader of the Conservative Group, took the opportunity to inform Council of a recent change in appointments to the Shadow Executive. Councillor Pat Bell had joined the Shadow Executive in place of Councillor Janette Jenkinson. Councillor Harvey felt that Councillor Bell would bring a great new perspective to the Shadow Executive. Councillor Harvey paid tribute to the work of Councillor Jenkinson who had made a tremendous contribution to the Shadow Executive over the past few years and who would continue to do so in her role as a councillor. He further expressed thanks to Councillor Morrell for his service. Councillors Harvey and Morrell had previously worked together as ward colleagues in Grange and Councillor Harvey said that Councillor Morrell's departure would be a huge loss to the Council.

Councillor Harvey drew attention to a further resignation from the Council from the Council, that of Anne Hall, and read out her letter of resignation. She stated that, since the Council had moved to three-Member Wards, she had found that she was unable to do justice to the eleven councils and communities within her patch. In addition, having been removed as one of the Council's appointees on the Lake District National Park Authority and the Housing Advisory Group, and with no place on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, she felt unable to influence decisions. Furthermore, she felt that her strength was in face to face, two way dialogue and that communication via electronic means was not her way of working. Anne felt it was time to move on and instead to provide her assistance voluntarily to local communities and continue to help keep young people in the Lakes.

Councillor Archibald asked that the Council's thanks for Anne's service be passed on. Anne had been respected by all political groups and had made a wonderful contribution which, Councillor Archibald believed, she would continue to do through her voluntary work.

Councillor Archibald also expressed thanks to Councillor Jenkinson for her work as a Shadow Executive Member and welcomed Councillor Bell into her new role.

Councillor Archibald explained that the two resignations resulted in a change in the political balance on committees, with the membership of the Planning Committee due to be considered later in the Agenda. He, therefore, formally asked officers to bring a report on the political balance of the other committees to the next meeting of the Council.

The Chairman, on behalf of all Members, also paid tribute to both Councillor Eric Morrell and to Anne Hall and thanked Councillor Jenkinson for her contribution as a Shadow Cabinet Member.

## **C/28**

### **COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2020**

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, introduced the report which explained that commissioning was the whole cycle of how the Council's services, programmes, projects and partnerships were planned, designed, developed, delivered, managed, evaluated and terminated. The Commissioning Strategy set out the Council's commitment to improving outcomes for local people through effective, integrated commissioning. It would ensure a co-ordinated approach within the organisation which would respond to the will and ambition set out in the Council Plan. It was complementary to the Council's existing Sustainable Procurement and Commissioning Strategy and would take precedence in so far as it referred to commissioning. Councillor Jarvis pointed out, however, that the Procurement Strategy was also being updated to ensure that it reflected the key elements of commissioning within it, including aspects of Social Value. The Commissioning Strategy set the framework for how the Council used the total resources available to it in order to improve outcomes for South Lakeland residents in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. It would ensure that robust performance management arrangements were in place, enabling the Council to monitor expectations of outcomes from commissioning and allowing it to monitor the environmental and social value relative to resources invested to evaluate impact, identify ways to improve performance and enhance the performance of existing activities.

The Strategy, which had been prepared to be in compliance with existing legislation, formed part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. It had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Jarvis informed Council of the comments raised at that meeting. In addition, at its meeting on 22 July 2020, Cabinet had recommended the Strategy to Council for approval.

Councillor Jarvis added that, in order to align with the new Commissioning Strategy, it was proposed that, in approving the document, the Council's Monitoring Officer be requested to make a number of resulting amendments to the Council's Constitution, as outlined in Appendix 2 to the report.

Councillor Jarvis, thanked officers for their work and read out and moved the recommendations contained within the report. He was seconded by Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

RESOLVED – That

(1) the Commissioning Strategy 2020, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and

(2) the Council's Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the required amendments to the Council's Constitution, as outlined in Appendix 2 to the report.

## **C/29**

### **DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2020/21 - 2025/26**

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, provided a highly detailed presentation on the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Plan was a key element of the Council's corporate planning framework to ensure that the Council had sufficient financial resources in the short to medium-term to deliver its statutory responsibilities and its Council Plan priorities.

Due to the impact of Covid-19, the report included high-level projections based on the information available as at early July 2020. The situation was, however, changing significantly and quickly. The projections would be regularly reviewed and reported during the 2021/22 budget preparation process. The Council was required by statute to set a balanced budget in February 2021.

Based on current projections within the report, the impact of Covid-19, combined with budget deficits reported in February 2020, meant that the Council would need to find revenue savings (including potential additional income) of between £1m and £1.5m in order to set a balanced budget for 2021/22. Further recurring savings of £1m would need to be identified by February 2022.

Due to reasonable General Fund balances and reserves at the start of the pandemic, robust financial management practices and a good track record in achieving efficiency savings, the Council was in a positive financial position overall compared to many local authorities, but now had a substantial challenge to correctly predict and then offset the budget deficit.

The MTFP, once approved, would form the basis of the budgets to be prepared during the remainder of 2020/21 for approval in February 2021. However, the MTFP and the Budget Strategy provided only the broad framework; individual decisions, particularly the level of Council Tax, would be approved during the budget process based on the latest projections available.

Options to balance the budget in both the short and medium term would be prepared for the 2021/22 Budget to be approved in February 2021 and for the 2022/23 Budget to be approved in February 2022. The size of the projected deficits might require solutions that would take some time to identify and implement. It would be important to ensure adequate consultation on proposals was carried out. The Commissioning Strategy would be used to identify how the resources of the Council could be used to improve outcomes for South Lakeland residents in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way.

Overall, the Council's financial position had been weakened significantly by Covid-19, despite robust financial management processes and a good track record in achieving efficiency savings. There were challenging times ahead to identify and decide upon options that would provide the solution to remaining revenue deficits.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had given consideration to the MTFP at its meeting on 17 July 2020 when a number of comments had been raised, details of which Councillor Jarvis provided, including a suggestion for a workshop for all Members to ideas on how to address deficits. In addition, at its meeting on 22 July 2020, Cabinet had recommended the draft Plan to Council for approval.

Councillor Jarvis closed, pointing out that the outlook was challenging and that sacrifices would need to be made in future years to offset the costs of Covid-19. He stressed, however, that the crisis also highlighted the benefit of the Council's prudent management of its finances over the last decade. He commended the tireless work of the Finance Team in keeping the Council's finances under control and in delivering the additional grants and services required at this time and offered his deepest thanks to that Team. Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendation contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Robin Ashcroft.

During discussion, Member raised the need to lobby the Government to provide more assistance in relation to the Covid-19 crisis. They commended the savings being made by the Customer Connect Programme and pointed out how this and the Council having built up its reserves was assisting in addressing the crisis. The Council was entering uncertain times, with residents and businesses facing tremendous financial upheaval. A rise in poverty had been seen in South Lakeland as a result of the crisis and Members commended the work being carried out by the Council to help residents to rebuild their lives and businesses. It was acknowledged that the MTFP built on the strong financial position that the Council had been in at the beginning of the year thanks to prudent financial management, with the Council continuing in its responsible approach, supporting key areas of the economy. Members reinforced the serious situation the both the district and the country was in.

In response to a query as to whether there had been any changes in car park use or an increase in visitor numbers in the past few weeks, Councillor Jarvis explained that, in the first couple of weeks of July, car park income had been one third below that of previous years. It had been particularly weak in towns, although stronger in the National Park area. Councillor Jarvis advised that he had not been updated since the report on the agenda had been issued in the previous week. The situation would, however, be monitored on a week by week basis and assumptions changed as necessary. However, Councillor Jarvis pointed out that, for this year, this would have relatively little impact upon the full year outlook. Although grateful for the 75% relief provided by the Government, he pointed out that if car park income picked up faster than expected, it would be the Government that gained the benefit. Councillor Jarvis replied to a further query regarding car park permits and as to whether work had been carried out to calculate the statistics excluding annual permits, a large number which would have been purchased prior to the start of the Covid-19 crisis. He explained that the Council was either giving a rebate or only charging for the part of the year during which the Council's car parks were open. This had been taken into consideration in the figures and was one of the reasons why income had been down 95% in the first quarter.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

**RESOLVED** – That the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2025/26 be approved.

**C/30 COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY**

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, referred to approval by Cabinet on 20 May 2020 of an Interim Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy to distribute the Council Tax additional hardship grant of £487,000 made available by the Government, not specific to Covid-19. Public consultation had been carried out on the proposed policy, and the report provided details on the response.

The Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy was a permanent Council Policy, and would allow the granting of additional Council Tax support where hardship could be shown, with each application to be considered on its own merits. It supplemented the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme approved in February 2020.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had given consideration to the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy at its meeting on 17 July 2020. No additional comments had been raised. Councillor Jarvis, however, referred to consultation on the Policy and to a response from Age UK South Lakeland. They felt that consideration needed to be made as to a client's ability to resume paying their full Council Tax liability following the period of discount applied for and, in addition, sought more information as regards the proposed methods of making residents aware of the scheme, with older people potentially being excluded from additions to websites/social media updates/emails. Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 July 2020, had recommended the Policy to Council for approval.

Councillor Jarvis hoped that Members welcomed the Policy which would assist the Council in helping some of the residents who were facing the greatest hardship at this time of crisis, and, having moved the recommendation contained within the report, was seconded by Councillor Suzie Pye.

Members acknowledged the growing problem of poverty and praised the work being carried out by the Council on housing and compassion being shown in this regard by officers of both South Lakes Housing and the Council. They expressed support for the Policy, welcoming the additional support that had been provided to supplement the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and thanking Councillor Jarvis and officers for their work.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

RESOLVED – That the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

**C/31 CUMBRIA CHOICE BASED LETTINGS ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**

***Note - Councillors John Holmes and Susanne Long declared non-pecuniary interests in this item of business by virtue of being Directors on the Board of South Lakes Housing, and Councillor Suzie Pye, for the purpose of transparency explained that she was a tenant of South Lakes Housing and had been through the Choice Based Lettings process. They remained connected to the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting on the item.***

In the absence of Councillor Jonathan Brook, Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder, Councillor Philip Dixon, Customer and Commercial Services and People presented the report. The report explained that approval of the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy, operation of which had begun in May 2011, would ensure that there was greater clarity for households in South Lakeland who were currently registered for social housing or who might register in the future. The proposed Policy would help to ensure that there was a consistent and fair approach amongst registered providers with regard to letting homes in South Lakeland to meet the greatest housing needs. The revisions would meet legislative changes relating to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and resultant Statutory Guidance. It was expected that the proposed changes would simplify the operation of the policy to the benefit of all who use it and to customers.

Attention was drawn within the report to the fact that this was a common Allocations Policy, the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings being a partnership comprising the six housing authorities in Cumbria and eight housing associations. All partners had to seek approval from their respective organisations to enable the revised Policy to be published by September.

Details of the extensive consultation carried out were provided within the report, the outcome of which had been considered by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group on 6 July and then by the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 July 2020. Details of the questions raised at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, together with responses, had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. The comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also been forwarded to the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Board. Cabinet, on 22 July 2020, had recommended the Policy to Council for approval.

Councillor Dixon, in presenting the report, expressed thanks to the Principal Specialist (People) for her work in preparing the document. Councillor Dixon drew attention to the increase in numbers of people on the Housing Waiting List which last year had risen from about 3,400 households in the previous year to 3,900 this year – virtually 4,000 households at the mercy of private landlords and the whim of market forces. He made reference to the Right to Buy scheme and to the failure of governments of all persuasions to provide Council housing in recent years. South Lakeland District Council was committed to carry on working with partners to see a continued increase in socially rented housing and a decrease over the next few years in numbers on the Waiting List and to support the most weak and vulnerable. Councillor Dixon read out and moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder.

Referring to Councillor Dixon's comments, Councillor Ben Berry suggested that not all private landlords were necessarily evil people. He said that it had been seen across history how one of the first things a communist government did was to execute landlords and that this was not an unpopular idea with far left of this country and the USA. Councillor Berry said that every time one logged onto Twitter posts could be seen about landlords. He wished to point out, though, that there were some good people who provided a decent standard of service. Councillor Berry then asked a question regarding local connection and those applicants with former arrears or debts.

In response to queries, the Principal Specialist (People) explained that there were some changes proposed with regard to the local connection criteria, however, that these were not dissimilar to those set out in South Lakeland District Council's own Local Connection Policy. There were various ways that an applicant could have a local connection, usually through living or working within the locality, as well as a number of

other reasons, for example, through close family ties to people living in the area. In terms of registered provider homes, many were given by Section 106 Agreement, which took precedence over the Cumbria Choice local connection criteria. There was, however, some flexibility in terms of employment, for example the right to move criteria, which allowed people to move into the locality from outside by reasons of employment. In addition, there could be exceptional circumstances as to why people may need to live in a particular locality. With regard to where an applicant had current or former social housing rent arrears and concerns raised in relation to the increase on financial pressures during this current time, the Principal Specialist (People) explained that there was a sliding criteria which had come from consultation and a joint response from the Citizens' Advice Bureaux across Cumbria. She explained that there were many tenants in receipt of housing benefit and suggested that to actually reach a debt of over £500 it was likely that a full rent payment was being made. She pointed out that there would be flexibility, with circumstances being taken into account and consideration given to how to rectify the situation in order to enable those people to bid. In a homelessness situation, however, the local authority's housing options team would assist to ensure that this was prevented.

Reference was made to the Government's ban in March 2020 on evictions and strong concern raised with regard to the fact that this prohibition was due to end the following month and with regard to the potential repercussions. The importance of the Council's continued work with South Lakes Housing on delivering affordable homes was stressed.

Clarification was sought on the change to policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010, and the Principal Specialist (People) explained that an equality impact assessment had been undertaken, with changes to syntax having been made throughout the document. The impact of changes had been classed as high due to a significant number of customers using Cumbria Choice being classed as vulnerable. Changes had been made to the Policy, but in terms of the impact of those changes, these were set out in Appendix 6 of the document, which included more detail on the various impacts and on the mitigations to these impacts.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the figure of 4,000 people on the Waiting List was equivalent to 7,952 people waiting to be housed, demonstrating the correctness of the Council's target for 1,000 affordable homes to rent by 2025 and the need for developers to adhere to the target of 35% affordable homes on each development. Members were encourage to visit sites such as Fir Tree Rise, Jubilee Close and Nobles Rest to see the wonderful community housing that had been developed in recent years.

Councillor Giles Archibald, during discussion, asked Councillor Berry to retract or correct his recollection regarding Councillor Berry's earlier inflammatory and irresponsible language regarding the far left wanting to execute landlords. Councillor Berry explained that he had personally witnessed members of the far left say that they wanted to murder landlords in this day and age and celebrating China having done that in the revolution there. In response to a query from the Chairman, Councillor Berry confirmed that he was purely reporting what he had heard and that he was clearly against that kind of rationale. He had, he explained, seen this type of talk online and said that it was a real thing. Councillor Archibald felt that the inference had been that there was an element of the political classes in Britain that held that point of view. He wanted to make it clear that there was no place in British politics for this and that there was no accusation being levelled against any section of the British political class. Councillor Berry said that this was clearly a view held by people and one that both himself and Councillor Archibald disagreed with, but a view that was held by far left

activists. Councillor Archibald felt that to ascribe those comments to the far left was irresponsible and that the remarks were not worthy of councillors in this Council. Councillor Matt Severn raised a Point of Order, suggesting that the remark regarding execution of landlords was irrelevant to this important debate on the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy and far below the conducted expected of a Member of the Authority. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer), however, explained that a Point of Order should refer to a breach of the Constitution's Rules of Procedure and that Councillor Severn was actually providing an opinion on what had been said. With regard to the comments made by Councillor Berry, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) believed that he had been repeating something which had been seen on Social Media. A little later in the discussion on this item, Councillor Webster suggested that those people being referred to by Councillor Archibald and Berry as far left were, in fact, anarchists, and he said that he felt insulted at the reference to far left. Councillor Archibald, as a point of information, said that his comments had been made purely in response to Councillor Berry's statement.

Discussion continued, and Members were pleased to see the Council taking the increases in numbers on the Waiting List so seriously, as well as the support being provided during the Covid-19 crisis, which it was hoped would continue during the strategic renewal phase and into the future. Also raised was a plea to private landlords for long term lets for families. In addition, the need was raised for flexibility and discretion for people from the borders in the south of the district such as Kirkby Lonsdale, Burton, Beetham and Arnside, who may work in the Lancaster area. It was felt that there was a need for flexibility and discretion regarding their applications for housing in order to assist in maintaining sustainable communities. The hope that all houses built in the future were fit for purpose was stressed, as well as the need to hold the Government to account and to ensure its support for authorities to provide good housing. It was further suggested that the whole social housing system required addressing.

In response to a further query, the Principal Specialist (People) provided a breakdown of figures and household make-up as regards the numbers on the Housing Waiting List. She reported that 46% related to single applicants, 16% to couples without children and 38% to families with children, representing approximately 7,592 people in total. She further explained that the figure of 4,000 related to one application per household.

Councillor Dixon thanked Members for the enthusiastic debate which, he believed, demonstrated the depth of feeling regarding the housing situation.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) sought consent from Members for the comments raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be passed on to the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Board, together with the questions and answers from that meeting. Members indicated that this was acceptable.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

**RESOLVED – That**

- (1) the draft Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations be approved; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Director of Customer and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder, to approve any minor changes arising from the approval process of other partners.

***Note – The meeting adjourned for a health break at 8.25 p.m. and reconvened at 8.35 p.m., when the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) carried out a roll call, during which the same Members who had previously joined the meeting confirmed that they were present, with the exception of Councillor Shirley-Anne Wilson.***

C/32

#### **PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

***Note - The Monitoring Officer and Independent Member had agreed that all Members of the Planning Committee be provided dispensation in relation to this item of business on the grounds that they considered that, without the dispensation, the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular matter would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business. Those Members of the Planning Committee present remained connected to the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting on the item.***

Councillor Pete McSweeney, Chairman of the Planning Committee, introduced the report, first referring to proposed changes in the recommendations contained therein. The first was a change to recommendation (2) so that it referred simply to “the political groups represented on the committee” instead of the “three political groups”. The second was due the resignations announced earlier in the meeting and the need for Council to note, as a result, officer advice that the changes did not alter the revised allocation of seats to the new Planning Committee as shown in the table at Appendix 2 to the report and, in addition, that groups who had not yet submitted their appointments needed to submit them to the Monitoring Officer following the meeting. Councillor McSweeney took the opportunity to offer thanks to Councillor Morrell who, as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee, had provided Councillor McSweeney with help, support and, above all, friendship during his time on the Council.

The report referred to a Peer Review of the Planning Committee that had taken place in 2015 and which had identified a number of areas of good practice and some suggestions which, if adopted, could provide enhancements. The scope of that Review had included addressing the size of the Committee which was made up of 18 District Councillors, with typically up to 14 Members attending meetings, with no substitutes being permitted in line with the Council’s operating procedures. It had been understood that this was the largest Planning Committee in Cumbria. It had been stated that, whilst a committee of this size obviously allowed for a significant number of the Council’s overall Membership to be potentially engaged in this really important decision-making process, it had to be questioned as to whether having a committee of this considerable size actually allowed for, and encouraged, appropriate forms of interactive engagement and constructive debate. The Planning Advisory Service generally recommended that planning committees should ideally be made up of about 12 Members. In line with that viewpoint, they had observed that, in reality, with a smaller number of Members actually being in attendance, the Committee appeared to function very effectively. The Planning Advisory Service had, therefore, recommended that when South Lakeland District Council came to reviewing the size of its Planning Committee, consideration be given to whether a slightly more manageable number of Members could potentially allow for better engagement, whilst still encouraging active participation. It had also been suggested that use of trained substitutes could also be a potentially useful “tool” in relation to a reduced Committee size and that appropriate advanced notice of anticipated apologies would allow their attendance at the pre-Committee site visits, etc. At that time, Members of the Planning Committee, had been of the view that the size of the Committee should remain at 18 Members and had resolved to make no recommendation to Council to change the size of the Planning Committee.

Through the Customer Connect Programme, the Council was transforming the way in which services were delivered to customers. With this in mind, it was considered timely to re-examine the Membership of the Planning Committee, also having regard to the previous recommendation of the Planning Advisory Service. It was also understood that a more recent review by the Planning Advisory Service carried out in January 2020 would also recommend the reduction in the number of members of the Committee. Statistics for the past three Municipal Years showed an average attendance of 14 Members at meetings of the Planning Committee. In 2020, South Lakeland's remained the largest Planning Committee in Cumbria, although some of the Cumbrian authorities allowed substitute Members.

It was felt that a reduction in the Membership should allow for more tailored and targeted training, thereby producing a more expert Committee. This would facilitate better focussed debate and the ability to conduct business more efficiently and effectively. A smaller Planning Committee would ensure more consistent decision-making in accordance with legislation and policies. At a time of the Council being required to consider its resources and expenditure, the financial savings were highlighted.

The 2015 Review had suggested that trained substitutes be identified for the Planning Committee and it was proposed that, for a period of 12 months, and to be reviewed at the next Annual Meeting, alongside the reduction in members of the Planning Committee substitutes be identified for the Committee, one each from each of the political parties. They would receive training prior to attending meetings of the Planning Committee and take the place of the Member from the same political party who could not attend the meeting.

The Constitution provided that the appointment of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of standing committees would be made at the Annual meeting. The Planning Committee could, if the appointment was not made at the Annual meeting, appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Emergency Non-Executive decision 008 dated 29 April 2020 resolved that all appointments from the Annual Meeting 2019 continue until the Annual Meeting on 19 May 2021. The reduction in number of Members of the Planning Committee did not, therefore, impact upon the current Chairman of the Committee.

Councillor McSweeney, in presenting the report, referred to the Planning Committee as a "shop window" for the Council. He explained how the service had improved in recent months, with a new Manager, Planning Officers and Enforcement Officer, as well as new legal support. In addition, the Planning Committee membership included experienced and dedicated Members across all political groups. He explained the need for continuous improvement and advised Members that, since inclusion and publication of this report on the agenda, the Planning Advisory Service had made some further recommendations as a result of the Review carried out in January 2020, suggesting that the Planning Committee should be made up of 20% of the full Council membership. Bearing this advice in mind, as well a number of complex calculations, it was felt that a membership of 14 would provide the best balance. Councillor McSweeney also raised the need for future examination of the call-in and the public speaking processes in relation to planning applications. He stressed the fact that the proposals related initially to a 12 month trial period.

Having moved the recommendations as amended, Councillor McSweeney was seconded by Councillor Giles Archibald who also emphasised that this would be a pilot for 12 months, with an opportunity for review. He thanked Councillor McSweeney and officers for their work and informed Members that, subject to approval, the Liberal

Democrat Group would be offering one of its places on the Planning Committee to the Council's Green Party Member, Councillor Judy Filmore, who was a diligent Member of the Committee and who it was believed should be given the opportunity to contribute.

Councillor Tom Harvey, Leader of the Conservative Group, put forward an amendment for an additional proposal, (5) "that the implementation of the changes be delayed until the next Council Elections or until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, whichever is sooner." He explained that his Group broadly supported the changes, however, felt that in light of the recent Council resignations, the current Covid-19 situation and with the potential for Local Government re-organisation, they should be put on hold. Councillor Harvey also drew attention to the fact that 14 Members and three Substitutes would not result in any ease in administration for officers. Councillor Pat Bell seconded the amendment.

Councillor McSweeney was unwilling to take Councillor Harvey's amendment on board, being keen to move forward with the proposals and create a "best of breed" service.

Members debated the proposed amendment, a number speaking against, feeling that the changes were long overdue and that there was no point in delay. The need to ensure a geographical balance in the Membership of the Committee, irrespective of the numbers, was raised.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) read out the proposed amendment in full. Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, raised a Point of Order, pointing out that the entire motion had been read out and suggesting that the amendment on the table was, essentially, an additional Recommendation (5). The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer), however, clarified that it was the whole of the original motion, as amended, which was to be voted on, although the additional Recommendation (5), to delay the implementation, being the fundamental point. If passed, this would then become the substantive motion, with all other elements being relevant and voted upon. Councillor Harvey concurred.

Members voted by roll call on the proposed amendment, which was lost, and the discussion returned to Councillor McSweeney's substantive motion.

In response to a query, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) clarified that the proposal regarding substitutes was not for a pool but for one for each political group. In addition, the figure of 14 Members with the introduction of substitution was felt to be manageable, with the current average attendance being 14 Members. Councillor McSweeney reiterated that fact that the proposals were for a trial period of 12 months and that if the proposed arrangements did not work, then they could be reviewed. A query was raised with regard to the outcome of the most recent review carried out by the Planning Advisory Service and Councillor McSweeney explained that there had, so far, only been a verbal response in relation to that review. A draft report had, however, been received in relation to the 16 July 2020 meeting of the Planning Committee which had been observed by the Planning Advisory Service and it was hoped that this would be released to Members within the next few weeks.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) drew attention to the fact that the recommendations did not specifically state that the proposals were, initially, for a 12 month period. Both Councillors McSweeney and Archibald agreed for this to be included within the substantive motion.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

RESOLVED - That

(1) the following be approved:-

(a) with effect from the September Planning Committee, a reduction in size of the Membership of the Planning Committee from 18 to 14, to be reviewed following a 12 month trial period; and

(b) the appointment of named substitutes from the political groups represented on the Council and as outlined in paragraph 3.10 of the report, those substitute Members to receive an allowance of £250;

(2) in light of officer advice received at the meeting regarding councillor resignations, it be noted that such changes do not alter the revised allocation of seats to the new Planning Committee as outlined in the table at Appendix 2 to the report (groups who have yet to submit their appointments to submit them to the Monitoring Officer following the meeting); and

(3) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to effect the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes.

**C/33**

**REQUEST TO CHANGE THE NAMES OF THE PARISHES OF LOWER ALLITHWAITE AND WINDERMERE**

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) presented a report which set out two separate requests from parish councils to change the name of their respective parish areas. Lower Allithwaite Parish Council sought approval to change the name of the parish to Allithwaite and Cartmel. Windermere Town Council sought approval to change the name of the parish to Windermere and Bowness.

At the request of a Parish or Town Council, the District Council had power under Section 75 of the Local Government Act 1972 to change the name of a parish, provided no other changes are proposed. The requests of both Councils were limited to the change of name of the parish and, therefore, could be considered and implemented by the District Council without the need for a Community Governance Review.

Members expressed support for the changes which, for Allithwaite and Cartmel, provided a clearer description of the relevant geographical areas and, for Windermere and Bowness, recognised the community identity of Bowness-on-Windermere as a settlement of similar size to Windermere, as well as bringing the name in line with other community organisations in the area.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

RESOLVED – That

(1) approval be given for:-

(a) the Parish of Lower Allithwaite to be renamed Allithwaite and Cartmel Parish; and

(b) the Parish of Windermere to be renamed Windermere and Bowness; and

(2) notices be published in accordance with the statutory requirements detailed in the report.

C/34

**THE BUSINESS AND PLANNING ACT 2020 - PAVEMENT LICENCE POLICY**

***Note – This matter was included as an urgent item of business under Section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The Chairman had agreed to the inclusion of the item due to the need for consideration without delay following the Bill having recently received Royal Assent. The report had been sent to all Members and published on the Council's Website on 24 July 2020.***

Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder, presented the report. As part of the national economic recovery, the Government had enacted the Business and Planning Act 2020. This Act covered four key areas: pavement licencing; off sales of alcohol; extension of unimplemented planning permission and listed building consent; and the right to apply to extend construction hours. A detailed overview of the specific changes was included within the report and background documents.

The Business and Planning Act 2020 had recently received royal assent and the licensing provisions had immediate effect. The Council was required to put in place appropriate delegation arrangements for the Pavement Policy and for the changes to planning controls and rules. The report informed of the necessary constitutional arrangements and amendments to the scheme of delegation to ensure that the Authority could process and determine applications.

Councillor Ashcroft drew attention to the legislation as regards Pavement Licences which provided the means for levying an application fee, capped to a maximum of £100. He explained that his Party believed in offering support to residents and, therefore, moved the recommendations contained within the report, subject to an amendment to waive the £100 licence fee per application for a period of six weeks from the announcement of the arrangements in recognition of the fact that businesses were under stress and in order to encourage them to respond swiftly. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) confirmed the wording which would be added to the recommendation proposed.

Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder, seconded the motion, thanking officers for their work and Councillor Ashcroft for his presentation and stressing the importance of the Council demonstrating support for businesses during difficult times by waiving the £100 fee for a period of six weeks.

In response to queries, the Operational Lead Specialist Services reported that the District Council had received from the County Council a list of all businesses currently licensed to operate street cafés. In addition, he explained that officers in the Locality Teams and Environmental Health would monitor the situation in order to ensure regularisation and compliance with the regulations. With regard to consultation on applications and publicity, businesses would be required to display standard forms in a visible location at their premises and there would be a press release the following day to communicate the arrangements. Whilst the waiving of the application fee was welcomed by Members, it was pointed out that it was not mandatory for councils to apply a fee. In addition, the need to keep local Ward Members informed on applications was raised, as well as the need for regard to the 1.5 metre social distancing requirements. Councillor Ashcroft acknowledged the historic charm of many of the district's towns which had not been designed for modern living, however, pointed out that the Locality Officers would be able to address any complications.

Also raised during discussion was the information recently provided to Members with regard to the lapse of the Authority's prohibition on alcohol consumption in public places, which had been an important safeguard to residents. Councillor Ashcroft accepted that this should be addressed although pointing out that the context of the legislation had been changed by the Government.

The Chairman asked the meeting if the motion was agreed. There being no dissent, it was

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the draft Pavement Licensing Policy in Appendix 1 to the report be approved and authority be delegated to the Director of Customer and Commercial Services to undertake final design and implement the procedures
- (2) authority to determine applications for pavement licenses under the Business and Planning Act 2020 be delegated to the Operational Lead Specialist Services, consideration of all appeals and any necessary enforcement/revocation action to be delegated to the Director of Customer and Commercial Services;
- (3) approval be given to the introduction of a new charge of £100 per application for pavement licences under the Business and Planning Act 2020 and the 2020/21 fees and charges be amended accordingly, the fee to be waived for a period of six weeks following the announcement of the changes; and
- (4) the Legal Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) be authorised to make any required constitutional amendments and changes to the scheme of delegation as described in the report and to ensure the Director of Customer and Commercial Services has the appropriate authority to implement the legislation and any further statutory instruments or guidance.

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

**C/35**

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

The Leader, Councillor Giles Archibald, first referred to the debt of gratitude owed to the National Health Service and Key Workers for their work during the Covid-19 pandemic which could not be repaid but which the Council could address by gesture. The Government had indicated that it would at some time this year be stopping free car parking for these workers. Councillor Archibald took the opportunity to announce that South Lakeland District Council would be making the concessionary parking for these people available in its car parks for the remainder of the year by note of gratitude for their work.

Councillor Archibald informed Council that the Authority's relationship with Barrow and Lancaster continued to deepen and flourish and he thanked Members for their support for the Joint Committee. A draft Strategic Plan had now been produced and the first meeting of the Joint Committee had been held on 22 July 2020. At that meeting, it had been agreed to set up two cross-council groups in addition to the work being carried out on the economy. The first group would address the issue of climate change, with Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism being heavily involved. The

second would examine poverty and hardship alleviation and the vulnerable, and would be co-ordinated by Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder. He hoped that this would be the first of many areas of collaboration across the districts.

Councillor Archibald expressed pride in the role played by South Lakeland District Council and other authorities in Cumbria in the settlement of refugees. Three years ago, it had been agreed to settle 285 refugees within Cumbria, and Councillor Archibald thanked Lawrence Conway for his involvement. All Cumbrian Councils had collaborated well under the leadership of the County Council and, although the target of 285 had not been met, Councillor Archibald was pleased to say that 244 had moved into the area; 244 people with better lives as a result of the local authorities had been able to do.

Finally, Councillor Archibald referred to the reorganisation of local authorities and the Government's desire to create mayoral combined authorities based on unitary authorities. He informed Members that he had co-signed a letter with Barrow and Lancaster asking if the Morecambe Bay solution might be considered as a possible option if the Government decided to push through the unitary route. Councillor Archibald stressed though that this was not a commitment and indicated that he would be happy to discuss the matter with Group Leaders and other councillors; this was a matter of concern to all.

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

From Councillor Matt Severn to Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder - *Could the Portfolio Holder tell me, with South Lakeland having one of the highest rates of furlough in the country because of the hospitality industry, what steps the Council are doing to support employment and what she thinks the government should be doing as well?*

Councillor Pye said that South Lakeland's vibrant visitor economy supported many businesses and livelihoods, but that this had also made it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19. Indeed, a third of South Lakeland's employment was in sectors most highly impacted – in hospitality, retail and leisure. This was reflected in the latest Government figures, which confirmed the number of furloughed employments in South Lakeland now stood at 18,700, or 40% of the workforce - the highest in the UK.

As a District Council, the Authority needed to do all it could to support businesses and residents at this critical time. The Council had a prominent role in the emergency response and in protecting the health and wellbeing of its communities. Working closely with its partners through the Local Resilience Forum, the Council had put in place the support needed to help its communities withstand the crisis. It had made the necessary changes to maintain its frontline services, protect public health and support its vulnerable residents, and the strength of this joint response would help provide the platform for economic recovery.

The Council had awarded business grants to the value of over £60m, setting up schemes, and diverting and training its staff in a matter of days to ensure prompt payment. This, in addition to the extension of business rates relief to those most directly affected, would have a significant impact in helping to safeguard jobs. Business Support was another important element and the Council had made a significant financial contribution to this, partnering with the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce to offer free support to start-ups and existing businesses across South Lakeland.

Councillor Pye informed Members of regular meetings with partners such as South Lakes Citizens' Advice (CAB), to support their efforts to help and advise people as they went through challenging personal economic change and faced an uncertain future. Indeed, the Council had recently funded a new webchat facility which would help the CAB reach people in its more rural communities. The Council met regularly with the local representative of the Department for Work and Pensions. The Job Centre had been set up to respond to redundancies, and to help up-skill, re-train, and to work with people to become work ready. The Council also had things such as the Jobfuse service available – this was a joint partnership created by the National Careers Service, the Department for Work and Pensions and Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, which supported businesses and individuals around redundancies.

As far as the role of Central Government, Councillor Pye felt it was right that the Job Retention Scheme should be recognised as a welcome lifeline for many workers and businesses in South Lakeland and that it had most probably prevented numerous redundancies. However, from 1 August, the Government support would start to taper off and then, at the end of October, the scheme would come to an end. Unless businesses were then in a position to return to a level of viability similar to pre-covid levels, they would struggle, and workers made redundant at a disproportionate level to the rest of the UK.

Alongside other local authorities, the Council had been in regular dialogue with Government ministers about ways in which Government financial support could be adapted or extended to greater benefit our communities. Councillor Pye wished to urge the Government to recognise that South Lakeland should not be put in the same pot as the rest of the UK when setting out an economic response to the pandemic. The feast and famine nature of the hospitality and tourism industry meant that South Lakeland businesses needed a financial package which saw Government support extended right through until Spring the following year. She urged everyone, if they had not already done so, to sign the joint petition from Cumbria Tourism and South Lakeland's own Member of Parliament, which had already garnered over 4,000 signatures. She emphasised that this had received the backing of cross-party politicians, National Park leaders and the equivalent of Cumbria Tourism in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Durham, Derbyshire, Liverpool, Manchester and Cornwall. This, Councillor Pye felt, went beyond partisan politics and was about safeguarding against the demise of people's livelihoods, and protecting against wide set financial hardship and the onslaught of poverty.

From Councillor Kevin Lancaster to Councillor Giles Archibald, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder - *Motorcyclists from urban areas throughout the north of England congregating at Devil's Bridge on Bank Holiday weekends have long been problem for many residents of the ward of Sedbergh and Kirkby Lonsdale. Because of the nature of settlement in Garsdale, with many houses joining on to the main road, the A684, speeding motorcyclists, unfamiliar with the roads are particularly dangerous and over the years this has led to many tragic incidents.*

*Since the end of lockdown, this year there have been more bikers than ever travelling at even greater speeds than before. They begin at 6 am and continue until 8 pm.*

*There was limited success against this menace in the early 2000s when former SLDC Cllr Paul Winn and I secured a 30 mph speed limit through Garsdale Street. Will this council work with myself, Garsdale Parish Council, Cumbria County Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park, the police and others to re-examine the speed limits through Garsdale with a view to solving this long standing problem for once and all?*

Councillor Archibald said that he shared Councillor Lancaster's concern and supported the request as did, he believed, South Lakeland's Member of Parliament, Tim Farron, County Councillor Nick Cotton, and the other District Ward Members for Sedbergh and Kirkby Lonsdale, Councillors Suzie Pye and Ian Mitchell. Indeed, Councillor Cotton had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner and had had a fulsome exchange of correspondence with the Police on this matter and, through Tim Farron, had written to the relevant Government Minister. Councillor Pye had also been very active on this issue. Councillor Archibald urged Councillor Lancaster to reach out to Councillor Cotton, Tim Farron and the other local Members, indicating that he would also be willing to be involved in discussion about this issue, to share the information already available and to seek a way forward if one could be found.

Councillor Lancaster welcomed the response, however, pointed out that one issue was with regard to the limited abilities of a parish council like Garsdale. He referred to the District Council's new way of working and to Neighbourhood Teams and suggested that South Lakeland District Council may be able to commit officer time and support to liaise with the Parish Council in order to move things forward and put the process in train.

Councillor Archibald undertook to reflect on the suggestion, pointing out that locality working was new and that the resources required careful management. He suggested, though, as a first step, that councillors ensured that they kept themselves aware of actions that had already taken place. If the resources were available, the Council would be then be able to provide assistance in helping move things forward.

From Councillor Malcolm Lamb to Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder - *After months of lockdown it is heartening to see shops and businesses opening up as the COVID-19 pandemic is brought under control, at least for now. But we must not forget that the virus is still out there and it is vitally important that it is not given a second chance by relaxing our guard, particularly with respect to social distancing. Council may know that planned measures to aid social distancing in Ambleside and Grasmere have been dropped because businesses and some local people felt that they would be deleterious however the abandonment of the plan has also caused some alarm, particularly for elderly and vulnerable local residents who now find social distancing difficult and potentially dangerous because of narrow pavements and busy roads.*

*Can I ask Councillor Ashcroft how the safe reopening of high streets action plan is working elsewhere in the district and can he assure the residents of Ambleside and Grasmere that the understandable desire for businesses to return to some sort of normality does not take precedence over public health and safety?*

Councillor Ashcroft explained that the health and safety of both residents and visitors was of great importance to the Council and was taken very seriously. He felt that it was heartening to see businesses opening up. This was of vital importance to all towns in the district, including Ambleside, with the visitor economy generating £1.4b for the district. There was no question of business taking precedence over normal health and safety – it was a matter of getting an appropriate balance.

Social distancing requirements had been reduced but remained a challenge. The High Street Action Plan was being actioned over a period six weeks. Government guidelines had to be addressed, with a reduction in social distancing from 2 metres to 1 metre plus. From the previous Friday, face masks had to be worn in shops, but there was no legal requirement for them to be worn on the street. The District Council had

played an important role in providing advice to shops on organisation within the premises and on queuing outside, Locality officers having been active in providing this support.

With regard to the Action Plan, Councillor Ashcroft informed Members that the Council was working with Cumbria County Council, the Highways Agency and the Lake District National Park Authority, which were key partners in terms of delivery. There had been close consultation with town councils who, it was understood, were speaking on behalf of their communities. The feedback was varied and Councillor Ashcroft explained that not all residents necessarily agreed with their local councils' opinions.

Councillor Ashcroft informed Members of the depth of the conversations which had taken place. On 27 May, shortly after the Government announcement, a Zoom meeting had been arranged with representatives invited from all local councils. It had been made clear that this would be an evolving situation and that the District Council was not imposing a solution, with feedback being welcomed from communities through their local councils. Similar meetings had been held on 10 and 29 June and 2 and 13 July. The 13 July meeting had seen uniform feedback from across the area, with people being incredibly supportive of the 20mph speed limit through town centres. There had, however, been considerable debate regarding car parking and concern expressed regarding suggested restrictions. Ambleside had been very specific that parking restrictions were not wanted in the town and so had moved forward on that basis.

Councillor Ashcroft said that the District Council would continue to listen to local councils. This was a difficult situation, with South Lakeland's towns being of ancient layout and not designed with the motor car or visitor economy in mind. What underpinned the Council's approach was current Government advice on social distancing and use of face masks.

Councillor Lamb felt that it was all about balance and said that, as long as there was still room for listening and changing things as time went on, then this was a satisfactory approach.

From Councillor Helen Ladhams to Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder - *I note that the short fall in income, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will have an impact on our reserves, which will have a knock on effect to the Council's ability to face future problems such as flooding or a pandemic. Therefore my question is; has the government provided councils with the funds to assist with this lost income or the costs of this Coronavirus pandemic?*

Councillor Jarvis responded, saying that it was clear that Covid-19 was placing a big strain on Local Government finance with, for this Council, £5m of additional costs and lost income in this year and £4m in the coming years. Back in March, Government ministers had promised to do all possible to help Councils to fight Covid-19. Although many had been sceptical of what had been said, Councillor Jarvis said that he had been pleasantly surprised, with four waves of funding having been provided, amounting to something over £3m. This still meant, however, that the Council was potentially £6m worse off due to Covid-19, after Government assist over a period of years. This equated to £140 per household in the district, and it had to be remembered that South Lakeland District Council's annual share of Council Tax was less than £200 on average. There had been a growing loss from leisure facilities, shortfalls in Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates and there would be future gaps in income, in particular from car parking. At present there had been nothing but warm words from ministers on those things.

Councillor Jarvis said that the Council would not be able to continue to absorb costs on this scale whilst maintaining business as usual. He explained that, unless the Government was prepared to provide significant additional funding over future years, the Council would be faced with extremely difficult choices over income and expenditure. Councillor Jarvis stressed that Covid-19 had been a global catastrophe and that South Lakeland had been particularly hard hit. He felt that it would be extremely disappointing if residents were forced to pay again through reduced services and costs, and he hoped that the Government would provide both additional grants and future funding that reflected the scale of the costs that South Lakeland continued to face.

From Councillor Eamonn Hennessy to Councillor Dyan Jones, Climate Emergency and Localism Portfolio Holder - *Please can Councillor Jones update the council on the latest climate conversations, the climate action fund and the biodiversity enhancement scheduled for Town View Fields?*

Councillor Jones informed Members that there had been one climate conversation this year and that this had been held online earlier in the previous week. It had started off in the usual manner, with discussion on how to get those not present at the meeting interested. The conversation had, as always, turned to planning and public transport. It was clear that people were becoming increasingly frustrated that the Government did not seem to be taking much notice of those in the countryside in the North. Councillor Jones believed that there seemed to be a growing group of activists, which was great in terms of lobbying Government. Meanwhile, within the Council, officers were working hard in implementing the Climate Change Action Plan. The list of projects being achieved was growing, including fitting of PV panels at the MintWorks and Town View Fields, as well as a proposal for Ferry Nab dinghy store and potential for the installation of a water sources heat pump. With regard to Councillor Hennessy's question in relation to Town View Fields and biodiversity, Councillor Jones explained that it was due close on 3 August for some ground works, with a lovely bog due to be created. Councillor Jones undertook to provide a full written response.

Councillor Hennessy indicated that he wished to pose a supplementary question. He was very proud that in Kendal, the Liberal Democrat Town Council had put together its own modest climate change fund for community groups who did not qualify for the District Council funding. He asked Councillor Jones if she would commit to look to lobbying to influence other parish councils within the area to do the same.

Councillor Jones advised that there was a climate change community fund toolkit being produced which would address this and undertook to include details within her written response.

From Councillor Tracy Coward to Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder - *Would the portfolio holder be able to update the council on the progress of the Economic Strategic Renewal Group?*

Councillor Ashcroft informed Members that the Group had met on three occasions and was starting to find its feet. It drew upon a range of experience from across the business sector and a good geographical spread. The Group membership was cross-party and also involved the local Members of Parliament.

Councillor Ashcroft said that the Group was now moving on to a strategic level, with a particular focus on renewal post Covid-19. Both officers and himself were finding it very useful to be able to pick up intelligence directly from businesses and this was proving to be useful in informing policy and the local plan.

The Group had identified a number of issues:-

- Recruitment – This was seen as a major issue, even following Covid-19, with Brexit being an additional problem.
- Place – This was about attracting the right people and securing talent from metropolitan areas and encouraging those who had left the area to return. It was about lifestyle and having a culture that could be engaged with. The need for affordable housing underpinned this.
- Local buying – How to do things more widely with a local digital approach.
- Importance of Digital – This was not just about the infrastructure. This was about businesses developing digital strategies and having the training available.
- Town Centres – Businesses saw the need for change and for towns to become multi-use hubs. It was not simply about retail.
- Communication Bridge – An understanding between business community and residents.

The Group had found its feet and needed now to hit a certain degree of critical mass and now right to bring in other agencies and to invite the Local Enterprise Partnership and Cumbria County Council to future meetings to hear directly from the district's businesses.

#### **C/36 MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

No comments or questions had been received in respect of the minutes of committee meetings held between 4 May and 5 June 2020.

#### **C/37 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR CHAIRMAN OF ANY COMMITTEE OR SUB-COMMITTEE**

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

#### **C/38 URGENT DECISIONS**

Copies of the report, which had been marked "to follow" on the agenda had been sent to all Members and published on the Council's Website on 24 July 2020.

RESOLVED – That the details relating to urgent Executive Decisions taken since 1 May 2020 in accordance with Paragraph 17.3 of the Access to Information Rules and Paragraph 16(j) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be received.

**C/39****EMERGENCY DELEGATED EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

***Note - Councillors Brian Cooper, Tom Harvey and John Holmes had raised with the Monitoring Officer, for the purpose of transparency, the fact that they were involved with organisations that had applied for discretionary grants as referred to in Emergency Delegated Decision 007 (Discretionary Business Grant Fund Scheme). They remained connected to the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting on the item.***

RESOLVED – That the following Emergency Delegated Executive Decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Leader’s decision noted by Cabinet at CEX/104 (209/20) be noted:-

- (1) 007 29-05-20 Discretionary Business Grant Fund Scheme;
- (2) 008 11-06-20 Re-introduction of Car Park Charges; and
- (3) 009 07-07-20 Management Agreement for Braithwaite Fold Caravan Park.

The meeting ended at 10.00 p.m.