

South Lakeland District Council Council

Tuesday, 15 December 2020

Promoting South Lakeland

Portfolio: Cllr Giles Archibald

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

Throughout the Covid – 19 pandemic the Council has been continuing to work 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. 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 the Covid-19 pandemic whilst adhering to social distancing and sanitation rules however, some works have been had to be postponed and therefore SLDC and EA have successfully obtained approval MHCLG to extend the funding guidelines.

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

With support from Officers the Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder has been heavily involved in supporting the Community Resilience Group throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

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 and has ensured sufficient sandbags are available for residents to collect at various sites across the District in preparation of adverse weather events.

All Council Emergency Lead and support Officers have completed virtual training sessions to cover the Covid guidance and arrangements for the running of Reception Centres.

The Council is continuing to support the work of the Resilience Unit to provide a online facility called 'Support Cumbria'. 'Support Cumbria' allows Community Resilience Groups to upload their emergency plans and update their contact details. 'Support Cumbria' also allows 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. The Strategic Economic Recovery Group

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 had escalated potential issues to MHCLG. The Council has also been working

closely with Cumbria Local Enterprises to share available information with businesses across the District regarding the changes the businesses will be required to undertake as a result of Brexit. Guidance, advice and support can be found on the Invest In South Lakeland website. The Strategic Economic Recovery Group that is led by the Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder and it made up of representatives from a variety of sectors across the District, recently met on 2 December to discuss the issues business face as a result of Brexit and the requirements and assessment forms they are required to complete by 1 January 2021.

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. The Council has responded to the pandemic 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 a variety of Business Support Grants, creation of a test centre at Kendal Leisure Centre, additional support for the Community Resilience helpline and distribution of food parcels and medication to vulnerable people across the District. The Council's Environmental Health Specialists have conducted the Test and Trace initiative as well supporting 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 through virtual meetings on its actions, ways in which they can support communities as well as guidance for protecting their communities and reopening of valued assets.

During the first and second lockdowns 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 roles which could not be undertaken from home were provided with the appropriate PPE and sanitation facilities and worked in way that adhered to social distancing. Appropriate protective measures have been installed that have allowed the Council to reopen its facilities to the public.

Local and Cumbria Wide Strategic Partnerships

The Bay Prosperity and Resilience Strategy has been jointly developed through the economic partnership between Barrow Borough Council, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council.

The three councils wrote to Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak to request a commitment from Government to back the strategy, so the Bay area can deliver a 'huge impact' on the performance of the Northern Powerhouse as the region's economies recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

The partnership is seeking government funding over the next two years to jointly develop plans and projects to further unlock the Bay area's economic potential.

These plans would then provide the evidence for a significant bid to Government at a later date, which, if successful, could provide millions of pounds of investment in crucial schemes that deliver economic growth.

The strategy document describes how the councils' economic collaboration is focused on eight themes:

- Renewables and clean growth
- Building on the area's arts and cultural offer
- Delivering new roles for ports at Barrow and Heysham
- Retaining and attracting the best talent and diversity
- Supporting high-efficiency 'food-agri' innovation
- Enhancing digital connectivity
- Growing healthy communities
- Building resilient town centres

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. These meetings have become increasingly focused on strategic issues of importance to residents of the county such as our response to Covid-19, climate change, racial discrimination, housing, wellbeing and Local Government Reorganisation.

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 have been feeding into. The group sets out the carbon footprint of Cumbria, and various alternative pathways to achieve the Cumbria Wide Target of achieving net zero carbon target by 2037.

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. I have also been appointed as a board member on the DCN Finance Workstream. Throughout the Covid-19, we have been in regular contact with representatives from Town and Parish Councils which have been very effective in information sharing, gathering local intelligence and sharing innovative ideas to develop communities.

Media and Communications

Council has been keeping residents and stakeholders regularly 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, review of the Local Plan and the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation.

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 Council's website where all advice and support relating to Coronavirus can be accessed easily. [\(Click here\)](#). The Council has been supporting other partners in sharing key messages throughout the Covid-19 pandemic such as Cumbria Constabulary and Lake District National Park.

South Lakeland News is distributed to each household with South Lakeland, covering around 52,000 properties. The most recent edition of South Lakeland News emphasised on how we have worked with our communities during the pandemic.

The Communications Team have been heavily involved in circulating 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 leader of the Council I will be undertaking a virtual staff message

As the Customer Connect Programme continues through the transition phase, customers and Stakeholders will be kept 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. Using online platforms the Council was able to distribute all business grants using an online application. This ensured that all eligible businesses were able to receive their grant monies in a timely manner.

Performance Management

The Performance Management throughout 2020/21 has continued to focus on the Council Plan measures of success to monitor progress towards the priorities for South Lakeland.

In Quarter 2 the measures reported showed very good performance, demonstrating that South Lakeland is a desirable place to live, work and explore. However in line with national trends and the influence of Covid-19 has impacted on some areas.

As of July 2020 5,100 claims had been made to the Self Employment Income Support Scheme which was the highest proportion in Cumbria. The most up to date figures will be reported in Q3.

In South Lakeland 46,200 employments had been furloughed at some point up to July 2020. This represented 42% of eligible employments, the highest of any local authority in the UK. The most up to date figures will be reported in Q3.

The Council remains on target to deliver the 1,000 new affordable homes for rent by 2025 with a cumulative total of 523 since 01/01/14.

The number of long term empty homes has fluctuated throughout 2019/20 however, the overall number from 1,079 in 2011 has reduced to 905 in 2019. Since 2015 the Council has undertaken targeted interventions to bring 435 empty homes back into use. The figures for 2020 are not yet available.

At Q1 2020/21 the figures of the number of households living in temporary accommodation had increased to 39 however, these increasing figures are in line with national trends and Covid-19 has been of influence. The main reasons for homelessness are: the reduced benefits for people of age under 35 years; high rents and loss of private sector tenancy; lack of affordable housing; family relationship breakdowns with young adults leaving home - sometimes leaving home due to abuse.

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 including rolling out recycling collections across the District. As well as reducing emissions the Council prevents 5,500 tonnes of emissions by reusing, recycling and composting nearly all of the waste collected across the District.

Life Expectancy in South Lakeland is higher than the UK's average at 84.7 years for women (UK 83.2) and 81.9 years for men (UK 79.6). For 2018/19 44.3% of waste has been recycled which is similar to 44.4% for 2017/18. Green waste influences this result significantly. This is because green waste is produced in large

quantities and contributes to significant tonnages compared to lighter plastic and cardboard. If the Council were able to collect food waste this would make the target of 50% much more achievable. However food processing plants are currently too distant from South Lakeland to make this viable. Plastic and cardboard kerbside collection covers 100% of households.

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. The next report focusing of the figures for Quarter 3 will be considered at Cabinet 20 January 2021.

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

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 agreed to continue the funding.

Local Authorities have been requested by Central Government to submitted proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. South Lakeland District Council has been working closely with Barrow Brough Council and Lancaster City Council to create a proposal for a new unitary authority around Morecambe Bay.

A consultation on the proposal was launched on 10 November following a formal submission of an outline proposal to Government. The feedback obtained formed an important part of the detailed submission to Government on 9 December. Government are now reviewing the proposals put forward and will decide which ones to take forward.

Proposals have also been submitted by the county councils in both Lancashire and Cumbria, the latter based on the existing county boundary. In a letter to councils in Cumbria inviting proposals for local government reorganisation, Government officials made it clear that they will consider proposals from 'one or more districts in a county and one or more relevant adjoining areas'. A cross-boundary authority around the Bay fits this criteria.

The detailed case set out the degree of local support for the proposal following a period of engagement with residents, businesses and key stakeholders, and examined how police, fire and rescue services would be managed, opportunities for reform to health and care services and included in-depth financial modelling.