

Overview and Scrutiny COVID-19 Recovery Workshop

Friday, 23 October 2020 – 10.00.a.m. – 3.00.p.m.

Summary of Key Ideas

Health and Wellbeing – Theme 1

- **Accessing services and information** – ‘Invisible groups’ who may not be accessing support and how they could be affected? There is a need for clear succinct information such as one webpage, advertised with clear advice. It should have the latest and most up to date measures and support links to other websites. Involvement from Locality Officers and involvement from other community groups communicating information as widely as we can.
- **Safe spaces for young people and exercising** – Re-engaging and social interaction in a safe way for young people. Opportunities for people to exercise safely during winter with less access to leisure facilities and parks during the winter months. Children and young people is a major concern. Their normal day-to-day activities such as access to play facilities and a reduction in physical activity is paramount during these times. How could this be developed and improved moving forward? Role of the Council during this.

Mental Health and Loneliness – A great number of residents are in social isolation, the elderly as well as the young. Further involvement from community groups such as Age UK. How do we support these organisations in the current climate? CCG involvement and access to Mental Health Services. Re-opening of day centres.

- **Re-building confidence and esteem** - How can the Council encourage residents to safely get out and back to ‘normal’? Opportunities to interact with others through groups in a safe way. Generate confidence in residents. Re-build community spirit and activity. How can communities adapt their normal events to be safe? There is a need for encouragement and support to adapt. Reassure needs to be provided to residents, especially the elderly.
- **Cross county issues** - Visitors creating tensions in some communities due to areas having increased demand and moving between county borders from different tiered areas with varying risk levels. Concerns for those living close to county borders with increased demand on suffering health services.
- **COVID Fatigue** – A sense of fatigue within communities, people are less careful with some elderly resident’s people making the judgment that they may as well have some quality of life in their remaining years and not be unduly constrained by restriction measures. How can they be supported? How can measures and guidance be reinstated or importance stressed?

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Economy – Theme 2

- **Long Term Vision** – The High Street in the current situation has possibly lost its appeal. Efforts need to be made to make this a destination and cultural experience for both visitors and residents. A need to reinvigorate towns and create a greater sense of value. Offer for some retailers competing online with other outlets due to the change in needs of demographic and visitors. There needs to be support to develop the digital part of the economy through connectivity. People are living and working in a different way, retailers need to adapt and have the right support. Inspire confidence in new and local businesses.
- **Cultural attractions** – Brewery Arts and other organisation in the art sector that serve with a wider cultural economy need to be supported. Importance of these, how will they operate going forward. Support needed to keep residents and visitors interested. Further innovation within the art sector with new ideas and within town centres, they will feel and look different. What can we offer collectively? Develop this and build an attraction for both visitors and residents.
- **Resident retention and satisfaction** - We need to have place people want to live and return to within the District. Current groups such as Kendal futures, LEP and Ulverston Bid – all of which drive opportunities and economy in the area. The Council needs to encourage people to stay, work and live here. How do we make the District have an appeal in the future climate?
- **Use of Retail and High Street Space** - Bigger question about land use in high streets due to the amount of the demand for retail space such as more people living in town centres. Could the Council produce appropriate policies to make this transition and provide more affordable housing? Could we enable small businesses such as craft businesses to develop and flourish, provide help to re-invigorate markets and empty shops. How they can be helped in terms of recovery and hobbies develop into businesses?
- **Opportunities for Young People** – High value jobs in the area so there needs to be opportunities for young people so they have hope. South Cumbria (bay arrangement) brings in jobs and collectively brings in resources and skills. (Barrow has untapped opportunities and Lancaster University with its local campus). Apprenticeships within the District and new schemes offering from government? Can the Council encourage secondary schools to deliver pathways – could we have an influence over this? Not just in GCSEs? Country skills, equine, local skills etc. things that are relevant to the District. Economic Development do meet with Kendal College regularly however this could be an opportunity to contact secondary schools i.e. at fifth form level and meet with them? **Action: Councillor Ashcroft: Something the Council could look into.**

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Resilience – Theme 3

- **Community Groups** – The importance of existing community groups established before COVID. These groups have further developed and support needs to be provided for them to continue to exist. Will new established groups continue? These groups can assist especially organisations that are already in deeper rural areas. Develop community help opportunities and volunteering opportunities. Many villages have their own support schemes through use of Social Media, these pre-existing support mechanisms strengthened in recent times and should not be lost.
- **Tackling Poverty and its Stigma**- The Leader and the Council are keen to improve poverty issues that have significantly worsened due to COVID. Financial resilience is of upmost concern in current times. There is a great deal of stigma attached to poverty and financial resilience. The Council received many enquiries from those who had never previously applied for benefits or support. (Food banks etc.) How can the Council normalise this? Residents need to know it is ok to access this support and they should know to get it and that it is available and in place for a reason. Linked to the recycling of school uniforms and recycling clothing. This supports sustainability and climate change, this should be encouraged not stigmatised. Increased use in food banks and universal credit, people need to be supported and this increase acknowledged and actioned.
- **Debt recovery and arrears** – The Council has been more sympathetic and adaptive to its approach on this however, it can be improved. Involvement from CAB – include further information about CAB and support on debt can be more evident in the form of a flyer to accompany debt recovery letters. People need to be assisted and feel supported during these times. CAB representative to be brought to future meeting to discuss debt advice and work with Locality teams on this. Pop-up shops in areas to advertise advice more on financial resilience and support.
- **Information Sharing** – Suggestion of an informative Poverty workshop or training session for Members. There needs to be more information and this needs to be educated to Members who can pass on to residents or those in their Wards with specific issues. Session for Members on offering assistance and information sharing to those in their ward on financial support. Two-way conversation with this being at a localised level through Member education and with organisations being supported at a wider level. Usage of Case Studies – what routes should people take when they are put in certain situations of financial difficulty?.(District and localised approach) **Action: Councillor Pye to arrange this and facilitate training.**
- **'One Page' Information** – A one-stop webpage with current information and offerings of support to direct Community groups and residents to. Communication needs to be stronger to communities via social media etc. to start spreading the correct and most up to date information/guidance. However, need to consider older generation and make sure information is available to them and easily accessible. Also can be cascaded to Parish Centres to cover all bases. **Action: Councillor Pye to contact**

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Community Resilience Group to do this. Aimed more at the public in future to allow for wider distribution.

- **Member Action** – Members can be active during this time and communicate with Wards. Action this now, start to test these ideas before next meeting. **Action: Members between now and 4th December 2020 (next Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting) will follow up on these discussions, actions and outcomes from the Workshop where possible.**

- **Housing and Redundancies** - At the end of October will be the end of furlough which will have knock on affects such as increased claims of Universal Credit. Will people be able to sustain their homes? Prior to crisis Planning were looking at modular builds but this has been on hold, this needs to be looked at again? Consideration needs to be given to affordable homes and homelessness during these times, people have less disposable income and there will be increased redundancies causing further strains on individuals and families. Winter pressure and concern about coping and resilience. Food and heating concerns. Issues surround the empty homes challenge, there needs to be continued pressure on this.