

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the proceedings at a virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Friday, 17 July 2020, at 10.30 a.m.

Present

Councillors

Vicky Hughes (Chairman)
Helen Chaffey (Vice-Chairman)

Pat Bell
Brian Cooper
Eamonn Hennessy

Hazel Hodgson
Susanne Long
Doug Rathbone

Mark Wilson
Janette Jenkinson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anne Hutton and Dyan Jones.

Officers

Linda Fisher	Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)
Claire Gould	Performance, Innovation and Commissioning Lead Specialist
Rachel Ireland	Case Management Officer
Julie Jackson	Principal Specialist People
Claire Read	Finance 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
Amanda Pharaoh	Housing Strategy and Delivery Specialist

Also in attendance were Councillors Giles Archibald (Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder), Jonathan Brook (Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder) and Andrew Jarvis (Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder).

O&S/14 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Following confirmation that the live stream of the meeting had commenced, the Chairman welcomed everyone to the second virtual meeting of South Lakeland District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman referred to the new Government legislation allowing councils to conduct remote meetings and explained in detail to all taking part, and for the benefit of members of the public, the procedures for the meeting. She then invited Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce themselves, to advise whether they were taking part by video or audio and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting. All Members present, including the Chairman herself, indicated that this was the case. The Chairman then referred to Members of the Council's Cabinet who were also present at the meeting, to participate and answer questions, although without voting rights. The Chairman invited Cabinet Members to introduce themselves and to advise whether they were taking part by video or audio and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members

participating in the meeting. The Chairman then referred to officers present at the meeting who would introduce themselves when asked to address the meeting.

O&S/15 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 June 2020.

O&S/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

For the purpose of transparency in relation to Agenda Items No.12 (Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy Review) and 15 (Tenancy Strategy Update 2020), Councillor Suzie Pye raised the fact that she was a tenant of South Lakes Housing and that, having sought legal advice, she would remain in the meeting as a Cabinet Member, with no voting rights.

Similarly, Councillor Suzanne Long, for the purposes of transparency, raised the fact that she held a position as South Lakeland District Council's nominated representative on the Board of South Lakes Housing, in relation to Agenda Items No.12 (Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy Review) and 15 (Tenancy Strategy Update 2020).

Councillor Eamon Hennessey declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item No.17 (Locality Development Update Report), by virtue of the fact that he was a Member of Friends of Fletcher Park, a group listed as a stakeholder in Appendix 2 of the Agenda.

RESOLVED – That it be noted that no declarations of interest were raised.

O&S/17 DECLARATION OF THE PARTY WHIP

RESOLVED - That it be noted that no declarations of the party whip were raised.

O&S/18 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLVED – That it be noted that there are no excluded items on the Agenda.

O&S/19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

RESOLVED – That it be noted that no questions, representations, deputations or petitions have been received in respect of this meeting.

O&S/20 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2020/21 - 2025/26

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was a key element of the Council's corporate planning framework, to ensure 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 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.

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder highlighted to Members the great fluidity of the situation and referred Members to section 4 of the MTFP, which outlined the impact of COVID-19 on the budget. Namely, £1.8 million was the current impact, which would be funded from reserves, with a drop in income of £3.8 million across the year. An income shortfall of £1.35 million could be seen in car parking in the first quarter despite car parks being fully open due to the income being much weaker in Town areas. Significant shortfalls were emphasised in other areas such as the caravan site, operating at restricted capacity. Additionally, there was a costing of £1 million in leisure services due to COVID-19, well beyond original budget costs. However, this was partly offset by additional government funding of £1.2 million in the form of grants in two tranches. Lastly, on top of loss of income and additional costs there was a reduction in Council Tax income, though this would not affect this financial year.

There would be further impacts of COVID-19 in the coming years, such as lower receipts from domestic rates and Council Tax income and a higher level of defaults on bad debts predicted between 2021/2 and 2025 with the Council expecting to retain this.

Moreover, fees and charges would be in a shortfall, cumulatively at a loss of £2.5 million in future years where there would be no expected government support to cover such shortfalls. The Portfolio Holder explained there would be a need to rebuild the reserves that would cost per annum for each of the next 3 years.

In summary, in the remaining years, there would be a loss of £3 million in tax and other income, which would leave the Council close to the level of allocated reserves, a major challenge to the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Council agreed the net draft budget on 25 February 2020, nevertheless there was a growing deficit around business rates and future government funding and the impact of COVID-19 needed to be factored into this. Indeed, the situation could worsen if there were a second wave or other related COVID-19 issues in occurrence.

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder closed, assuring Members that officers were already looking at ways to cut costs and increase profits. Despite the grim Medium Term Financial Plan there was a need to offset costs of COVID-19 and in light of the current climate, reserves had been built up. The Portfolio Holder offered his deepest thanks to the Finance team, commending their tireless efforts.

The Chairman and Members thanked the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder and officers for their efforts for their underlying work and for producing the detailed update.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Member Comments

Member - Asset management partners could add to our reserves and we should push our partners harder to sweat assets harder. For instance, Lambert Smith Hampton are in charge of a large amount of the Council's assets. Many of our assets include car parks; they will play a key role in part of the recovery of Town Centres.

Member - The new introduction of Pavement licences generated from Licensing and Planning, can this money be dispersed somewhere else? When we do make a surplus there is a case for reviewing how we hold reserves. Sharper use of such licences could help offset some risks.

Member - Comments around car parking, this is a major issue, we have not increased our fees in the last few years so we should really look at that.

Cabinet Response – The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that the Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder would discuss this during the next item, Agenda item No. 8 — Shaping The Covid-19 Pandemic Response, he would be able to provide a clearer position on how local groups were promoting this.

Member – Could we curtail costings on green collection and substitute this with composting and give a compost bin instead of green waste collection, could this be a cost saving?

Cabinet Response - The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained the Council received recycling credits for all green waste collected and Home Composting was not something that was possible for all residents.

Member - We need to think about future ideas, there are a lot of ideas floating around. Cabinet, when they think it is right, could they have an asset meeting, as done in previous years. Could this be looked at in the future? We could all look at ways we could save money through a forum with a wide range of Member ideas.

Cabinet Response –The Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder thanked the Member for this comment and stated Cabinet will take this on board and will work with Chair of Overview and Scrutiny on this.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 be noted; and
- (2) the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be taken forward as appropriate for consideration by Cabinet on 22 July 2020.

O&S/21

SHAPING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources presented the report and explained the scale of financial challenges facing the Council, stating that the item sat neatly between finances and the discussion of the Committee's future Work Programme.

The response aimed at providing the Committee with a focus to shape the Council's response to COVID-19 as part of the Committee's future Work Programme. The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources thanked Officers for their hard work and can do attitude during the pandemic. He explained that due to the positive staff response in light of COVID-19 assisted by technology processes and systems, as part of the Customer Connect programme, the Council had been in a position to respond in a proactive and timely manner. He explained that despite the pandemic continuing to manifest, there were

still requirements for the ongoing dedication of staff and of resources. The Director expressed his thanks for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look into this matter.

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources drew Members' attention to the report and explained that the depth of crisis was not known at this point in time. There was a definitive change in how the Council would work through its recovery with a shift in discussions to focus on recovery, rather than the immediacy of crisis. He reminded Members of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the messages this had for the organisation. He highlighted to Members Section 3 of the report, which provided a short retrospect on a countywide response with service disruption and additional activity. The Director discussed the different weights of work, the re-issuing of Business Rate Tax relieve, and that of business grants. In the form of information and communication, the Council was best placed to communicate issues. He then further discussed business continuity, the flexibility of Human Resources and the work between Officers and Members to keep the Council functioning.

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources highlighted to Members the provision of services and explained the Council would need to ensure the reinstatement of services such as the re-opening of leisure centres. He explained that legislation was changing, an example of being able to respond to the pandemic and what ways the government can assist in our recovering economy. He stated that Customer Connect had enabled the Council to reassess and update the risk register with muted virtual decision-making, robust decisions and the re-join transition.

Section 5 of the report focused on possible solutions and how would they would work, how would they formulate and how the Council's resources were being best deployed. As highlighted in Section 5.4 of the report there were areas of operation that faced additional demand from the crisis such as the role of Housing and Tax collection, Licensing, Public Protection and many other areas including Finance, Human Resources and Democratic Services, all of which had additional demands placed on the services.

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources highlighted to Members, at Pages 86-87 of the Report, the accepted increased demand on Services where the recovery would look at initiative, combining service responses and addressing key issues, candidate recovery initiative, addressing housing needs and continued work of building financial resilience. The Council was already aware of some of these issues however, there was a need to implement further controls and act up on intelligence in promoting recovery and communication.

Moreover, the Director explained the necessity for more robust financial planning and lobbying for the District's need with government. Lastly, the Director drew Members' attention to Page 78 of the report, which outlined that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could hold a fuller workshop session in October focussing on the Council's COVID-19 recovery. This would provide an opportunity to refine the response between officers and Members through intelligence and recovery. Upon closing, the Director thanked the Chairman and Members for considering this matter as part of their work programme.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Member Comments

Member – As discussed earlier on the topic of car parking, how will shops be re-opening during the pandemic? The Council need to encourage businesses to get back on to the high street.

Cabinet Response – We as a Council have responsibilities, the Council have pulled together an action plan with Cumbria County Council and the Highways authority. There is no top down solution and we will evolve this as far as possible with a light touch approach to encourage people to return to town centres. Community input has been sought with a number of different opinions, a lot of which are based around car parking. The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources has already highlighted that this is a marathon and not sprint. Despite the excitement around opening up, restrictions will still be in place at least for the next 12 months.

A lot of research has already been done on aspects of re-opening town centres such as around the areas of car parking to ensure businesses benefits and to prevent people from loitering with free car parking while not actually delivering money in tills. Studies have shown people may spend a little bit of money if they are not worried about car parking while those who are being charged would churn their focus, spend money and then leave. Council finances are in a serious state with the sweating of assets in order to generate maximum revenue into the Council. There is a longer term economic strategy review group being set up to determine a longer term strategy in order to reap further benefits but this would include contentious issues with a diverse range of views.

Cabinet Response – There are responses to bids with involvement from Parishes and Towns. There was some ideas expressed on how the Council could encourage the re-opening of high streets and we are very open to receiving local ideas and input from others. As discussed at Kendal futures, it is for the community to tell the Council their ideas. There are current discussions on the cessation of concessions from key works and the possibility of free parking at the end of the year to care workers as a gesture of thanks to the NHS.

Member- Querying the implementation of the re-opening high streets, there is a lot of kick back on the topic of opening up. Some people are not interested in social distancing but more concerned about getting through the door, there are a lot of issues, especially in Grasmere and Ambleside.

Cabinet Response – It is necessary to go through the proper channels such as through Parishes and Town Councils, as people tend not to like change. There needs to be a balance between peoples' health and safety, and work from that basis. There is a desire for businesses to return to trading however, a balance needs to be struck.

Member – Voices are being heard in communities as evidenced during a meeting on the re-opening of Ulverston, people supported their bid and support was shown from other organisations. The small meeting held by the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources and attended to by other Overview and Scrutiny Members was very positive. The Director's presentation was positive and I am fully accepting that this response be

part of Work Programme. I welcome the idea of a workshop and the report; it will be important in shaping the Council's future to work constructively. I feel privileged to sit on a forward thinking Council and I thank officers for this.

Member – I endorse this approach but I have received feedback from being involved in the running of voluntary groups and elderly residents are still concerned about returning to shops. One reason for this is due to the lack of local data available to residents for the District as a whole. If this was available, this could possibly inspire confidence.

Cabinet Response – Infection data for South Lakeland is very low but available online on a weekly basis. However, people should still be cautious as there are those who are not symptomatic.

Member – Data would be useful however, the rates can change on a daily basis so the new rules regarding face coverings should be adhered to whatever the rate.

Member – I am pleased to take on this piece of work as a District Councillor. Colin Cox, Director of Public Health for Cumbria County Council, has explained that as a community we are as up to date as we can be. We need to develop this confidence and do what we can, this suggested report would allow for this.

The Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder emphasised his thanks and his gratitude towards officers, particularly through their work leading on the re-opening of town centres and for their open and flexible approach in response to the pandemic. He also thanked the Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder for his ongoing work.

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources provided a summary of the comments from Members namely around the focus of discussions around town centres, parking management, locally lead approach, balancing public health needs and economic activity, working with other agencies and using initiatives that were realistic and promoting confidence within groups within the Community.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- (1) note the summary of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to date attached at Appendix 1;
- (2) hold a one-day workshop focused on making further recommendations to the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- (3) present any findings at the next Committee date.

O&S/22

WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) provided Members with an update following last year's Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. She explained the Committee's previous work on Locality would be discussed later in the Agenda at Items No.16 and 17.

The Monitoring Officer explained last year's work on climate change fed into the Climate Change Action Plan, considered at the Committee's last meeting on 22 June 2020, which then later fed into discussions at Cabinet and then at Council.

The Monitoring Officer then clarified the Private Water Supplies Workshop report held on 23 February 2020 would next be presented at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 04 December 2020. Moreover, she explained the Morecambe Bay and Clinic Commissioning Group were to provide an update at the cancelled April 2020 meeting; however, these updates would be re-arranged in due course and provided when appropriate. Lastly, she updated Members that the work with Northern Rail would continue and so would the work with the Community Safety Partnerships.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2019/20 update be noted.

O&S/23 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) delivered an update on the Work Programme for 2020/21. She explained it was a recommendation that the Committee focus on the Council's COVID-19 recovery in the form of a one-day workshop. Members would be asked to work on particular themes and the Sub-Group of the Committee who met also discussed that the Committee were to agree that the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting would take place in December 2020 with a full day workshop to be held in October. This would allow the Committee to feedback any recommendations into the December 2020 meeting and consider any other items that would feed into Council and Cabinet decision making.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2020/21 focus on the Council's COVID-19 recovery; and
- (2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee hold a one-day workshop in October and a full Committee meeting in December.

O&S/24 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2020/21

The Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder introduced the Council Plan Performance Monitoring report for quarter one of 2020/21. The Leader thanked the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer), and all Officers within the Monitoring Officer's team for their work over the previous months in running the Council's Virtual Meetings with such efficiency.

The Council had gone through a phase of discontinuity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this in turn, had created a new state of living, ultimately changing the risks of the Council. This had impacted society, and as a result, unemployment rates and claims for Universal Credit had increased. The Leader brought to Members' attention that South Lakeland had one of the highest furlough rates in the country demonstrating that businesses had struggled during this time, although Government measures had helped tremendously.

The Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder praised the Council's resilience and adaptive capacity in its continuance to work during this time. He then drew Members' attention to the Council's Strategic Risk Register within the report. The matrix provided an 'at a glance' view of the Council's priority risks in which the Leader highlighted to Members those areas considered a higher risk. He then welcomed questions and comments from Members.

Members had hoped the Council were looking at these risks on a weekly basis since the percentages were very concerning, they also sought clarification on what was meant by 'above tolerance', a term used within the risk register. Assurance was sought that the Council would be acting upon these risks on a weekly, and even daily, basis. The Leader, in response, stated those top risks were being given great attention on a daily basis, as demonstrated earlier in the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan presented by the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder.

The Health, Wellbeing and Financial Resilience Portfolio Holder, a Member of the Local Community Resilience Group who met fortnightly, provided further clarification on those risks affecting welfare and poverty. She explained the local representative for the Department of Working Pensions provided weekly material and Karen Evans, Manager of South Lakes Citizens Advice Bureau, provided weekly updates in between meetings. It would be difficult to project with any accuracy, as a Council, what could be put in place in the future. The government's furlough scheme would end in October 2020, resulting in an increase in redundancies and claims for job support. Therefore, re-training and re-skilling may need to occur in order for local residences to secure jobs outside their ordinary areas and possibly travel outside the district of South Lakeland.

The Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder provided assurance that all areas would be monitored closely on a regular basis.

Members discussed the lack of business opportunities at the moment and the need to support young people at college, emphasising that many were worried, particularly those graduating from education as to what opportunities would be available to them. The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources David agreed this could be worked into the COVID-19 response.

In response to a question on the consultation of the proposed closure of Newton Rigg Agricultural College, the Leader and Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder and the Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder confirmed they themselves had no involvement nor any invitation in relation to the consultation. However, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) advised a response could be obtained from other Officers to confirm this.

RESOLVED - That;

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Summary of Performance as detailed in the report;
- (2) the detailed risks information contained within Appendix 1 to the report; and

(3) any comments be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 22 July 2020.

Note – at this point in the proceedings Members proposed a short adjournment which was agreed and announced by the Chairman. The meeting adjourned at 12.26 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 12.36 p.m. and the Legal, Governance and Democratic Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) took a further roll call to confirm that the same Members were in attendance at the reconvened meeting and to confirm that they were able to see (where practicable) and hear all Members participating in the meeting.

Note – at this point during the adjournment Councillor Eamon Hennessey and Councillor Janette Jenkinson left the meeting.

O&S/25

CUMBRIA CHOICE BASED LETTING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Committee were asked to consider the draft Cumbria Choice Based Letting Allocation Policy. Approval of this Policy would ensure that there was greater clarity for households in South Lakeland who were currently registered for social housing or who may 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. 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.

The Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder expressed the critical importance of the policy to the Council. The policy had sought affordable rent across Cumbria policy since its operation begun in 2011, which its last review taking place in 2016. Since then, there had been the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act alongside other significant changes to the process by which people could apply to housing. These changes had been incorporated into the policy. The Portfolio Holder thanked the Chair and passed over to the Principal Specialist (People) to provide further information to Members on the details of the policy.

The Principal Specialist (People) had previously met with a small Sub-Group of the Committee on 06 July 2020 who had addressed various points surrounding the policy. Questions were raised on tenant representation, data by district, banding and qualification amongst others. The Board had appointed a specialist advisor, Andy Gale, a former Government Minister who had reviewed the policy.

The Principal Specialist (People) explained the bands within the policy and made reference to the Homelessness Reduction Act which prevented homelessness from happening in the first instance. The Principal Specialist (People) discussed the issue of downsizing for those who had close family in the area and a local connection, explaining that the section 106 agreement would take precedent. The Specialist provided clarification on what stipulated a reasonable offer and explained that the Appeals process was not entirely clear with a right to review. From the Local Consultation there had only been a small number of replies namely from the Parish Council of Coniston who had set out a number of different points with little comment from individual responses.

The Chairman thanked the Principal Specialist (People) for her proactive response to questions and expressed her gratitude to the Specialist's hard work on the policy.

As outlined in the document the total number of active applicants was nearer to 4000 people whereas this had previously been 3000 people. Members sought clarification if this was a true representation of the current problem. In response, the Principal Specialist (People) provided a breakdown of household composition and make-up; 40% of the register related to single applicants, 16% to couples and 38% to families with children, representing approximately 7,592 in total including dependants. The register had around 3000 applicants but housing need had increased as a result of COVID-19 and this would continue to have an impact.

The Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder explained there had been an increase on the waiting list despite active efforts and that numbers were still increasing. The Portfolio Holder explained grant schemes on the policy had slowed down during this year. In terms of the planning policy, 300 homes per year was based on government criteria. He stated there was little opportunity to do anything else other than the current efforts. However, the Local Plan would give consideration to the housing need and the Council was doing its best to address these issues.

Members referred to the possibility of additional training when consulting on such policies since some aspects were rather complex. The Strategy Lead Specialist suggested he could assist with this proposed training due to his involvement in the development of strategy with Administration Housing being a top priority.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the draft Cumbria Choice Allocations Policy be recommended to Cabinet; and
- (2) any comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 22 July 2020.

O&S/26

COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder presented the Policy to Members that was approved by the Council following Government funding as set out in Appendix 2 of the report. The Portfolio Holder explained the details of the scheme, as set out in points 2.3, where the Council had discretion on using the remaining amounts and that it was expected some funding would be available for other discretionary grants. The policy, now live, helped those residents in the most need. The Council were to vary funds and give consideration to each applicant on their own merits, leaving any judgements to Officers.

The Portfolio Holder drew Members' attention to Section 5 of the policy where support would stop when funds had been distributed. Age UK South Lakeland had stated clients were returning to pay full Council Tax through methods of communication and access to online facilities. The Portfolio Holder had hoped the Committee would welcome the policy to help residents during such times when facing hardship.

Members expressed their satisfaction in the operation of the scheme and approved the Policy.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy actions to date to give additional support to Council Tax payers be noted;
- (2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered the proposed Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy at Appendix 1, page 329; and
- (3) the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 22 July 2020.

O&S/27 COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2020

The Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder presented the new Commissioning Strategy for 2020. He drew Members' attention to a statement within the document, '*customer and community needs drive how we design our services*'. He explained that commissioning is about how we cycle in an equitable and sustainable way and how services and programmes were designed for the community and that the Council must incorporate more efficient commissioning practices. He further explained to Members the changing mind-set, local needs and priorities of communities and revealed the ways in which the Council must meet those while considering cost and value of the service. He highlighted to Members the graphics in Appendix 1 of the report, which significantly demonstrated the different scales of commission. In order for the Council to align with the new Commissioning Strategy certain constitutional requirements needed to be met, as outlined by the Monitoring Officer in Appendix 2 of the report.

Members stressed how the strategy linked in with the Strategic and Innovation Review, which looked at recovery from COVID-19. They felt it was a useful policy to think Local since the Council was an authority with a large area with many furloughed workers and with a rise in unemployment. It was suggested some of the commissioning ideas could be transferred and passed on to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and private strategy and investment groups, this would be a way to assist local communities.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve the Commissioning Strategy 2020; and
- (2) any comments be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 22 July 2020.

O&S/28 TENANCY STRATEGY UPDATE 2020

The Deputy Leader and Housing and Innovation Portfolio Holder commended the recent activities of Officers through their continued engagement during the pandemic and

congratulated them on their flexible working abilities. The South Lakeland District Council Tenancy Strategy was published jointly with Eden District Council in 2013 and gave Registered Providers, i.e. housing associations, a steer on how they should implement their policies relating to flexible tenancies and affordable rents and ensure that the Council's view was taken into account.

The Housing Strategy and Delivery Specialist explained the only modification being proposed as a result of the Review was to protect the Council's more rural areas from the 'Voluntary Right to Buy' ('VRTB') should the Government decide to roll it out nationally. The proposed modification reflected the current regulations on Right to Buy and Right to Acquire in minimising the impact of loss of housing on rural areas. The current regulations protected homes in designated rural areas from the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire. The main pilots ended in March 2020 whereby the Government made no comment. The Housing Strategy and Delivery Specialist did liaise with registered providers and they did not oppose, and she anticipated good working relationships with them in the future.

Members highlighted within the report that there were various warnings; those reliant on benefits and rental payments would be worse off each month and the wording suggested that if we could not hold back on Government strategy on what it might bring then no one else would. Specifically, it was stipulated in paragraph 30 of the Strategy *'in 20 years we may no longer have social rented homes available'*. One Member stated the Council should fight against this and asked if these warnings could be emphasised more in a press release. The Housing Strategy and Delivery Specialist undertook to these warning being of greater emphasis going forward.

Members were also concerned about the long standing promise about replacement housing as in the past this had not numerically always been validated by what had happened. One Member sought clarification on if the provider was a national company could this replacement take place anywhere in the country and not just in that particular area. The Specialist agreed the rules were very vague and that this was a risk and could be applicable anywhere, she explained the protection was encompassed in the report.

RESOLVED – That:-

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Tenancy Strategy Update; and
- (2) any comments be taken to Cabinet at their meeting on 22 July 2020 as appropriate.

O&S/29

DEVELOPMENT OF LOCALITY WORKING THROUGH CUSTOMER CONNECT - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Customer and Commercial Services presented the Locality report and outcomes of the communities. He explained that Members would be aware of the Council's embarkation on a whole scale transformation process whereby new job families were created, and following this process, Members' wished to explore the area of Locality. He explained a scoping meeting had taken place in March 2019 alongside various Workshops. One Sub-Group had met to consider measuring success while another Sub-

Committee had met with other responsible authorities with a final meeting taking place to summaries recommendations.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report and recommendations, as detailed in Appendix 1, pages 411 - 412, arising from the work of the Task and Finish Group; and
- (2) these recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet for further consideration as part of the design of the locality working arrangements.

O&S/30

LOCALITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE REPORT

The Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder passed over to the newly appointed Operational Lead for Locality Services to provide Members with a more in depth update.

The Locality Team had spent a lot of time working in response to COVID-19. Within the report Officers had looked at activity in terms of customer requests and house visits. The team was divided in terms of responsibility for certain areas and specialisms, with more complex work being allocated to Specialists. 'My Account' was now operational and the Lead provided details of upcoming work including a briefing to all Members on Thursday, 31 July at 5.00.p.m. to clarify channels for Members for activities and issue reporting. This would include insightful data and address target areas where problems may occur. A similar briefing would occur in August 2020 to Parishes and to CALC in September 2020.

The Operational Lead for Locality Services explained a pack would be produced to be sent out to all Members following the briefing with further information. One Member sought clarification on paragraph 3.7 of the report however it was explained this would be summarised at the briefing. Within the packs all different channels of communication would be explained in order to simplify contact methods with a great deal of information being available providing emails and relevant websites. The most efficient way for requesting a service would be through the website and the use of online forms from 'My Account'. The Lead explained requests to the Chief Executive would be delayed as they would go through various departments and personnel instead of a direct channel.

The People Portfolio Holder, in response to a comment on the increased workload of Locality Officers, agreed that Councils should not be burnt out and was mindful of this comment.

Members congratulated the Operational Lead for Locality Services on her new appointment.

RESOLVED – That the progress of the Locality Service be noted.

Noted – At this point in the proceedings Councillor Brian Cooper left the meeting.

O&S/31 EQUALITIES VERBAL UPDATE

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources provided the Equalities update to Members, on behalf of the Strategy Specialist, Simon Blyth, whom sent his apologies. The Council Plan committed the Council to this policy explaining that no one would be left behind. The Equality and Inclusion Strategy was based on the Equalities Act and could be reviewed by the Committee on an annual basis.

There were four objectives of the Strategy and the Director provided details to the Committee on employee inclusion and the strengthened internal arrangements of the Council. He highlighted to Members the work of the Corporate Equalities Group, which was made up of varying Specialists and the Leader of the Council, with an aim to fulfil the strategy of developments.

The Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources provided further equality examples and improvements such as the Council's website and equalities impact being updated and fully accessible and following completion, all areas of the Council offices would be accessible.

The Council worked in partnership with the Members of South Lakeland Equality Partnership Group with an aim of reducing inequality. The Director talked of hidden migration such as the life experiences of people who call Cumbria their home and discussed how religion should be understood and tolerated. The Council aimed to connect communities and challenged prejudice with a third party hate crime reporting centre and multi-cultural forum. The Director used Millerground as an example of an inclusive play area winning a Bronze Award. The Council was compliant with all equality duties with a deeper understanding having eight different strategies.

Following a request from a Member, the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources undertook to circulate the equalities update document to Members.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

O&S/32 CUMBRIA HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Councillor Mark Wilson provided a verbal update on the work of the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee to Members. He suggested that an invitation should be extended to Claire Donovan in order to address the Committee to provide a more in depth update at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 2.25 p.m.