

South Lakeland District Council
Council
23 March 2021
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 working 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 been undertaking investigations in preparation for the works commencing during the Covid-19 pandemic whilst adhering to social distancing and sanitation rules however, SLDC and EA have successfully obtained approval MHCLG to extend the funding guidelines due to the delays experience by the pandemic.

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 offering support and advice to communities groups across South Lakeland and understanding the pressures faced.

The Cumbria Local Resilience Forum established support through the emergency support helpline for people at high risk and those who do not have support available from family or friends. The Council supported communities with partners by coordinating the supply of essential food, medicines and supplies.

In response to the pandemic the Council has coordinated the distribution of business grants, test and trace support payments and offered advice and guidance to businesses who were able to re-open between the lockdown restrictions.

Emergency Planning

South Lakeland District Council supports 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 during recent storms and the Coronavirus pandemic and has ensured sufficient sandbags are available for residents to collect at various sites across the District.

All Council Emergency Lead and support Officers have completed virtual training sessions to ensure that Covid guidance and arrangements are in place should Reception Centres be required.

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.

Critical services across the Council were involved in identifying potential risks faced with Brexit and potential mitigations where possible. Along with other Local Authorities the Council escalated potential issues to MHCLG. The Council is 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 ([Click here](#)).

Working with the relevant portfolio holders, the council is monitoring very closely the crisis relating to COVID -19. We have liaised 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.

Town and Parish Councillors have been regularly updated through virtual meetings/ emails/ press releases on the actions being taken to mitigate against Covid and identify ways in which they can support communities as lockdown restrictions begun to ease.

During the lockdowns 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.

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 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 chairing the Cumbria Leaders Board (CLB) and attending the 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, housing, wellbeing and Local Government Reorganisation.

A Climate Change Sub 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 and the Cumbria Leaders have been feeding into this.

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 Work stream.

Media and Communications

Council is continuing to keep 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. Most recently regular messages have encouraged residents to get involved in consultations for the proposal put forward for Local Government Reorganisation.

The Communication Team have been regularly updating Residents, Partners and Councillors through Covid-19 highlighting the variety of support mechanisms available for businesses, families, communities and vulnerable people. A specific webpage has been set up on the Councils website where all advice and support relating to Coronavirus can be accessed easily. ([Click here](#)). The Council is supporting other partners in sharing key messages throughout the Covid-19 pandemic such as Cumbria Constabulary and Lake District National Park, particularly as we begin to see lockdown restrictions easing.

The Communications Team have circulated regular internal messages relating to Customer Connect via the internal Intranet page, which is accessed by employees and Councillors. These messages provided updates and information on the ongoing programme progress, the types of training available, support opportunities and organisational role changes. Blogs are also uploaded by members of the Leadership Team which explain about new team roles and responsibilities and their experiences. As leader of the Council I undertook a virtual staff message to acknowledge and thank them for their ongoing hard work, support and dedication throughout the pandemic.

As the Customer Connect Programme continues through the transition phase, there are now 24 online forms covering a number of services, including Street Scene, Locality and Case Management. These forms allow the customer to access services online 24/7. The scrums have also developed 12 COVID application forms to support the various business grant schemes and test and trace application, as well as a number of internal forms which allow for work requests to flow through the organisation more efficiently.

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 3 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 such as the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation is increasing.

The number of grant payments made at 30 September 2020 for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure in South Lakeland was 5,370. The most recent figures will be available in the Q4 performance report.

As of July 2020 5,100 claims had been made to the Self Employment Income Support Scheme which was the highest proportion in Cumbria and represents 76% of those eligible. Most recent figures will be available in Q4.

In South Lakeland 3,800 employments had been furloughed during October 2020. South Lakeland had the highest number of furlough rates within Cumbria.

The claimant count shows those currently out of work who are actively seeking work. As of November 2020 South Lakeland had a claimant count rate of 3.1%, this is 0.7% down from August 2020. The claimant count is below count and national averages.

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 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 Q3 2020/21 the figures of the number of households living in temporary accommodation had decreased to 24 in comparison to 39 in Q1. These 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 2019/20 the total carbon emitted was 2,400 tonnes, which is a reduction from 3,585 tonnes in 2012/13. 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 85.3 years for women (UK 83.4) and 81.5 years for men (UK 79.8).

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

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

In late 2020 Local Authorities were requested by Central Government to submit proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. South Lakeland District Council worked closely with Barrow Borough Council and Lancaster City Council to create a proposal for a new unitary authority around Morecambe Bay.

The three authorities launched a consultation on the proposal was launched on 10 November. The feedback obtained formed an important part of the detailed submission to Government on 9 December.

Proposals were 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.

Government have now confirmed that it will formally consult on The Bay option. The consultation is open to businesses, community and voluntary sector organisations and members of the public who live, work or study in South Lakeland, Barrow and Lancaster, and will close on 19 April 2021.

The joint proposal for a new Bay authority received strong support locally when it was unveiled late last year, in response to a letter from Government in October sent to councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset inviting submissions on 'locally-led proposals for unitary government' in those areas.

A joint online survey, independent opinion poll, a number of well-attended virtual engagement events with community groups, businesses, parish and town councils and young people and feedback from more than 4,000 respondents demonstrated overwhelming backing for a Bay unitary.

Under the plan, the district councils (Barrow, Lancaster and South Lakeland) and county council in Cumbria would be replaced with a newly created, single tier 'unitary' local authority for the area. The new authority would deliver the services currently provided by both the district and county councils such as waste and recycling collections, public realm, planning, highways and transport and adult and children's social care.

The proposal indicates how by working together with a range of organisations in the Bay area, the new authority will drive positive change on shared priorities including building community power and engagement, reducing inequality and inequity, improving wellbeing, building community wealth and tackling the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity.