

**South Lakeland District Council**  
**Council**  
**Tuesday, 27 July 2021**  
**Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio**  
**Holder Report**

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**Portfolio:** Cllr Jonathan Brook

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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, Regional, National and other strategic partnerships as appropriate.

Oversight and development of the Council Plan priorities in collaboration with Portfolio Holders and based on community need.

Leading on the Councils Public Service Reform agenda.

Leading on Devolution, Local Government Reform and working with Barrow Borough on all aspects of “ The Bay”, this requires co-operation on economic development, infrastructure, housing and employment growth as well as skills and knowledge.

To lead on community engagement.

**Policies, Plans and Strategies**

- Communications Strategy
- Council Plan
- IT/Information/E Government Strategy
- Performance Management

**Key Areas**

- Community strategy/area planning/development of recovery group
- Local and Cumbria Wide Strategic Partnerships
- Media and Communications
- Performance Management
- Relationships with Government Departments, and other relevant authorities at a sub-regional, regional.

## **Community Strategy/Area Planning/Development of Recovery Group**

Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic the Council has been continuing to work 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.

The EA have undertaken substantial investigations to allow for the works to be undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. The EA will be undertaking Ground Investigation (GI) works to inform their detailed design of the proposed Stock Beck Catchment Drain. The GI work in the fields around Stock Beck will commence from Monday 28th June 2021, until mid-September. The EA have adhered to social distancing and sanitation rules throughout however, in light of the pandemic causing delays, SLDC and EA successfully obtained approval MHCLG to extend the funding guidelines.

Construction of Phase 1 of the Flood Scheme has commenced at Dockray Hall, Romney Gardens, Natland Road, Clarks, and Helsington Mills. The detailed designs required for Phases 2 and 3 of the Flood Scheme are underway with planning permission being sought in Spring 2023 and Autumn 2022.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has coordinated the distribution of a number of different business grants, test and trace support payments and offered advice and guidance to businesses who were able to re-open between the lockdown restrictions.

The variety of grants available has helped businesses and individuals of all sizes and sectors, safeguarding businesses and jobs throughout the district.

Collectively across the 6 Cumbria District Councils a total of £393.8m has gone out so far across the various schemes. To date South Lakeland District Council has distributed the highest number of grants through the 8 different grant schemes than the other 6 District Councils with a total of £146,680,537.

### **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

As a member of the Cumbria Leaders Board (CLB) I shall be attending the Joint Districts Board to discuss the key issues across Cumbria and seek partnership working to implement resolutions. These meetings will be 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.

As a member of The District Council Network (DCN), I shall be attending the DCN annual conference later in the year.

## **Media and Communications**

Council is continuing to keep residents and stakeholders regularly updated on the council's activities through a range of communication channels, including social media, press releases sent to all key media, the resident newspaper published three times a year (South Lakeland News) and website.

This has included developing communications to ensure residents are kept informed about all areas of the Council's work, from anti-littering campaigns and business surveys to the opening of new playgrounds and our work to tackle climate change.

The Communications Team has continued to provide regular updates on the Covid-19 pandemic response work, highlighting the variety of support mechanisms available for businesses, families, communities and vulnerable people, including public health messages, applying for support grant applications and the vaccine roll-out.

A specific web page on the Council's website included all advice and support relating to Covid-19. The Council is working with and supporting other partners in sharing key messages relating to the pandemic response and lockdown easing, including Community Resilience Groups, Public Health England, Cumbria Constabulary and Lake District National Park.

In addition the Council's Communications Team has led on the promotion of consultations on Local Government Reorganisation and the Local Plan Review and launched a very successful campaign to encourage people to sign-up to the new My Account function, making it easier and more convenient for residents and businesses to access council services online. The campaign launched in March 2021 and My Account now has more than 7,000 sign-ups.

Internally the Communications Team has continued to keep Council staff and councillors informed about organisational issues, including the ongoing Customer Connect transformation programme. This has included developing a new 'One Team' section on the internal Intranet page, accessed by all employees and councillors, to help share Customer Connect updates and success stories.

During the pandemic staff have been working remotely and a number of new communications initiatives were developed to help teams stay in touch with colleagues and the wider organisation, including virtual 'Team Talks', regular chief executive briefings and HR-led virtual coffee mornings.

## **Performance:**

The Council is committed to delivering high quality, cost effective services that meet the needs of residents and improve quality of life. To help achieve these goals performance is measured frequently and in line with the priorities in the Council Plan. Performance reporting is aligned with the updated Council Plan for 2021-2026 as adopted by Council on 23rd February 2021 – the four priorities are:

- Working Across Boundaries – Delivering Sustainable Regional Growth Across Morecambe Bay
- Delivering A Balanced Community – A South Lakeland For All Ages
- Delivering A Fairer South Lakeland – A South Lakeland For Everyone
- Addressing The Climate Emergency – A Carbon Neutral South Lakeland

Quarter 1 2021/22 is showing very good performance - and demonstrates that South Lakeland is a very desirable place to live, work and explore. In line with the national trend and the influence of Covid-19 the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation has increased – however the Council has a wealth of mitigations in place to reduce this as far as possible.

Following a review of the Strategic Risks for Quarter 4 2019/20 it was found that 65% of risks were above appetite. This significant change was due to the pressures brought about by Covid-19. The reviews undertaken more recently during Quarter 4 2020/21 and Quarter 1 2021/22 show that improvement in risk continues - now with a significantly reduced 38% of risks positioned above appetite. This demonstrates the Council's continuous focus on risk management and governance.

Detailed information for both performance and risk can be seen in the Cabinet report 'Council Plan Performance Monitoring' following each quarter end. Risks are also reported to Audit Committee on a regular basis.

## **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 which 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 Council in Cumbria 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.

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.

Government conducted a formal consultation on all proposals submitted. The consultation closed on Monday, 19 April 2021. We are now waiting for Government to announce which, if any, of the four options for Cumbria it wishes to take forward.

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date Signed off</b>
Section 151 Officer	Not applicable (N/A)	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	12/07/2021	12/07/2021

<b>Circulated to</b>	<b>Date sent</b>
Lead Specialist	12/07/2021
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	07/07/2021
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	N/A

