

South Lakeland District Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Friday, 04 February 2022
Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio
Holder Report

Portfolio: Cllr Jonathan Brook

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 the other Cumbrian authorities and civil servants to help to deliver the most appropriate outcomes for our residents from the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

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

The Council continues 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 has undertaken substantial investigations including Ground Investigation (GI) works to inform the detailed design of the Stock Beck Catchment Drain. The GI work in the fields around Stock Beck commenced in June 2021 until September 2021. SLDC and EA successfully obtained approval from MHCLG to extend the funding guidelines following the delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Construction of the initial stages of Phase 1 of the Flood Scheme has been completed at Dockray Hall, Romney Gardens, Natland Road, Clarks, and Helsington Mills. The EA is continuing to develop new plans to be considered by the planning authority to install glass panels along Aynam Road following consultation with residents and the Kendal Town Council Working Group. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council 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 lockdown restrictions.

A total of 8 grant schemes were available and distributed to help businesses and individuals of all sizes and sectors, safeguarding businesses and jobs throughout the district. Most recently, the Council has distributed a total of £4,014,659.00 through the additional restrictions grant scheme.

The Council is now in the process of undertaking an audit of the grant schemes delivered and distributed.

Local and Cumbria Wide Strategic Partnerships

The Bay Prosperity and Resilience Strategy was jointly developed through an economic partnership between Barrow Borough Council, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council. The partnership is continuing to seek government funding over the next two years to jointly develop plans and projects to further unlock the Bay area's economic potential however, following the Local Government Reorganisation announcements the future economic plans and projects will be reviewed in the future to incorporate Eden District Council within the footprint.

Future plans would 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 previous strategy document described how the councils' economic collaboration 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

Work continues with partners including Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership to progress future developments at the Glaxo site in Ulverston. Work is also ongoing with the Lake District National Park Authority and Cumbria County Council together with other partners to progress the Windermere Gateway Project.

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 consultations to the opening of new playgrounds and work to tackle climate change, as well as responding to media enquiries and supporting filming requests in the district.

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 vaccination programme.

The Council has continued to work with and support 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.

The Council's Communications Senior Specialist is a member of a Communications Advisory Group on Local Government Reorganisation and is working with colleagues from the other five districts and county council to support communications around LGR. This has included the development of transition branding, regular staff and member updates and briefings, a new external website about LGR and a staff Sharepoint site.

The Communications Team has promoted a number of successful initiatives, including a community litter 'clean-up' campaign, engagement with the Local Plan review and sign-ups to the new My Account function, making it easier and more convenient for residents and businesses to access council services online. My Account now has nearly 9,000 sign-ups since its launch in March 2021.

Internally, the Communications Team has continued to keep Council staff and councillors informed about organisational issues, including the ongoing Customer Connect transformation programme.

To support this a new 'One Team' section was launched on the internal Sharepoint site, accessed by all employees and councillors, to help share Customer Connect updates and success stories. A popular recent addition to this area has been a regular feature sharing messages of praise and thanks from members of the public for the work of council staff.

During the pandemic staff have increasingly 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 Management

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 A Balanced Community
- Delivering A Fairer South Lakeland
- Addressing The Climate Emergency

Quarter 2 2021/22 is showing 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 is high. The Council has many mitigations in place to reduce this as far as possible – and these can be seen within the Council Plan Performance Monitoring report each quarter.

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 2 2021/22 show that improvement in risk continues - now with a significantly reduced 19% 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 these criteria.

The Bay proposal was not accepted by Government as part of its local government reorganisation announced in July 2021. The proposal accepted by Government was a new East Cumbria proposal that joins the areas covered by Barrow Borough, Eden District and South Lakeland District Councils. A new West Cumbria authority joins the areas covered by Allerdale Borough, Copeland Borough and Carlisle City Councils. The new authorities formed to replace the six District Councils and the Council in April 2023.

The Council has begun engaging with a radical transformational agenda, which will deliver enhanced and improved services for residents whilst ensuring that excellent local services and support continues to be delivered throughout the transitional period.

A Local Government Reorganisation Programme Board has now been formed that is working on a clear timetable of activity around various work streams and themes. Council are now entering the design phase, which will shape its plans for future services.

1 April 2023 (also known as Vesting Day) will be a major milestone in the Local Government Reorganisation process, as it will mark the end of the initial transition stage, and will be followed by a period of transformation in the new authorities.

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Section 151 Officer	N/A	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	N/A	N/A

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	12/01/22
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	04/02/22
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	N/A