

## SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings at a meeting of the Council held in the Assembly Room, Kendal Town Hall, Kendal, on Tuesday, 22 February 2022, at 6.30 p.m.

### Present

#### Councillors

Pete McSweeney (Chairman)  
Matt Severn (Vice-Chairman)

Caroline Airey	Pete Endsor	Andrew Jarvis
Giles Archibald	Judy Filmore	Helen Ladhams
Robin Ashcroft	Gill Gardner	Malcolm Lamb
Rupert Audland	Fiona Hanlon	Kevin Lancaster
Pat Bell	Tom Harvey	Susanne Long
Ben Berry	Eamonn Hennessy	Ian Mitchell
Roger Bingham	Hazel Hodgson	Suzie Pye
Jonathan Brook	Chris Hogg	Doug Rathbone
Helen Chaffey	Rachael Hogg	Peter Thornton
Ben Cooper	John Holmes	Heather Troughton
Brian Cooper	Kevin Holmes	David Webster
Jonathan Cornthwaite	Vicky Hughes	Ian Wharton
Tracy Coward	Helen Irving	Mark Wilson
Philip Dixon	Ali Jama	Shirley-Anne Wilson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Coleman, Michael Cornah, Alvin Finch, Janette Jenkinson, Dyan Jones, Brian Rendell and Janet Willis.

### Officers

Inge Booth	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
James Cartwright	Case Management - Support Services
Lawrence Conway	Chief Executive
Linda Fisher	Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer)
Dan Hudson	Strategy Lead Specialist
Julia Krier	Legal, Governance and Democracy Specialist
Richard Machin	Communications Specialist
Simon McVey	Operational Lead Support Services
Claire Read	Finance Specialist (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
Simon Rowley	Director of Customer and Commercial Services
Helen Smith	Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer)
David Sykes	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources

**C/91**

## **MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the Chairman be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14 December 2021.

**C/92 EMERGENCY NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

RESOLVED – That

(1) the following Emergency Non-Executive Decision taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with Part 3 of the Council's Constitution 3.(B 1) (1.1) be received:-

- 023 19-01-22 Business Support Grants – Omicron Response January 2022; and

(2) any spending outside any budgetary provision be noted.

**C/93 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No questions, representations, deputations or petitions had been received from members of the public in respect of this meeting.

**C/94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) drew Members' attention to the following dispensation provided by herself and the Independent Person under Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, paragraphs 2.7 and 4.12, on 18 February 2020 for a four year period ending in 2024:-

“Members of Council who are Parish Councillors who may have a DPI in relation to the Parish Budgets that will be funded through the Parish precept and Council Tax.

Members who are County Councillors who are involved in the setting of the County Council budget and the consideration of the County Council element of Council Tax.

Members who are appointed to Outside Bodies and who may have DPI interests as a result of these appointments (due to receiving any allowance, payment or indemnity) elements of the budget relate directly to the organisation's to which they are appointed.

Members who are dual and triple hatted and who may have a DPI due to receiving any allowance, payment or indemnity from the County and Parish / Town Councils.

Members living in Council accommodation and who are affected by plans or programmes in the budget “housing matters where the member is a tenant of the Council, provided the budget item does not relate to the member's tenancy or lease.”

Members of the Council who receive Independent Remuneration Panel Members Allowances.”

**C/95 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUDED ITEMS**

There were no excluded items on the Agenda.

**C/96 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank officers, community groups and Members for their work in trying to keep communities safe during the recent storms.

**C/97 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

**C/98 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder, referred to regular information and updates being shared with Members in relation to Local Government Reorganisation, also drawing attention to the dedicated Website for members of the public in relation to the process. He further drew attention to the legal hearing which had taken place earlier in the day relating to the Cumbria County Council Judicial Review, informing Members that the judge had comprehensively dismissed the claim of Cumbria County Council. The judgment had shown that the six districts, of which South Lakeland was one, were correct in their approach to the Court proceedings. The process, in respect of local government reorganisation, should now continue free of legal challenge and, hopefully, this drew a line under this particular matter.

Councillor Mark Wilson was pleased that the application for Judicial Review had been put forward although was less pleased with the outcome. He felt that this had been an important step to take in terms of due diligence and clearly drawing a line in the sand.

Councillor Roger Bingham having asked if there had been any mention as regards who was responsible for the costs of this action, the Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) undertook to respond separately to Members on the matter pending receipt of the formal judgment of the Court.

Councillor Ben Berry referred to Windermere and Bowness Town Council's bid to take over the ownership and management of the bed of Lake Windermere and sought Councillor Brooks' thoughts, including on whether he supported such action. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) informed Members that she was not aware of any recent formal approach or communication, however, advised that officers had met with the Town Council. This had been a positive meeting and the latest position was that a meeting with Government officials regarding the Consequential Order and how the Lake would be treated was awaited. She was not aware of any communications since that meeting a few weeks ago but indicated that she would be happy to pick this up outside of the meeting.

Councillor Kevin Lancaster referred to issues which had been reported to the Audit Committee regarding the situation with Copeland Borough Council and asked if these issues had been resolved. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) drew attention to recent council budget meetings that had taken place throughout Cumbria and explained that this was a matter for Copeland Borough Council. Officers were working on papers that would come forward to Joint Committees and Shadow Authorities regarding financial sustainability for the new authorities moving forward.

**C/99****ESTABLISHMENT OF A WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS JOINT COMMITTEE**

Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader of the Council and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder presented a report which recommended that a Westmorland and Furness Joint Committee be established by the Councils making up the Westmorland and Furness Council.

As part of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process, the Council had a requirement to establish a Westmorland and Furness Joint Committee within fourteen days of the Structural Changes Order (SCO) coming into force, with the Joint Committee being dissolved in accordance with the SCO, on the day following the first Shadow Authority for Westmorland and Furness Council meeting.

Councillor Brook informed Members that the Cumbria Monitoring Officers had recommended that one authority should host the Joint Committee and that South Lakeland District Council had agreed to host the Joint Committee meetings for Westmorland and Furness. He added that the suggested terms of reference had been attached at Appendix 1 to the report and were based on the content of the SCO laid before Parliament on 24 January 2022.

The report set out the Membership requirements of the Joint Committee, which would be comprised of three nominated persons from each District Council as well as the County Council. For South Lakeland District Council, the political balance of appointments was two Liberal Democrats (with one being an Executive Councillor) and one Conservative. Councillor Brook informed Members that the nominations had now been received and that those Councillors were himself and Andrew Jarvis for the Liberal Democrats and John Holmes for the Conservatives.

Together with the nominations for the three Members as outlined above, Councillor Brook moved the recommendations contained within the report, those having been recommended to Council by Cabinet. He was seconded by Councillor Tom Harvey, Leader of the Opposition, who welcomed the balanced political representation and the fact that the Members nominated had a wide variety of real world experience.

Councillor Mark Wilson expressed disappointment that the Council had not taken its usual view and had not included Members from all political parties. He further questioned the Terms of Reference and the Joint Committee's purpose to establish a proposed Calendar of Meetings for the Shadow Council for adoption at its inaugural meeting, saying that it was not yet known what shadow committees would be formed. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) explained that all of these matters had to go through both the Joint Committee and the Shadow Authority, and could change depending on how the Constitution was set up. At the moment, she said that the Calendar included the Shadow Executive, Shadow Authority, Shadow Scrutiny and the potential for task and finish groups. Approval would first have to be sought on this and Members of those committees would direct accordingly. Councillor Mark Wilson referred to a recent County Council Health Scrutiny Board meeting and the importance of integrated care systems and the need for scrutiny arrangements to be maintained and improved in the new Authority. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) reminded Members that the sovereign councils would remain and that, with changes afoot such as the Health and Social Care Bill, it was a matter for Cumbria County Council whether they continued with Health Scrutiny Board meetings. She explained that the role of the Shadow Authority was to work towards vesting day and to ensure functions were

transferred and that the transition was a smooth one. There would be a different role for scrutiny in the Shadow Authority. Councillor Mark Wilson referred to other bodies to which this Council did not send representatives, e.g. Coastline. There were, however, representatives of this authority at the North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority. He pointed out that there were many issues that the Council was involved with which related to its working communities, and he was afraid that something important may be forgotten. Councillor Brook responded, noting that there was a rigorous process being undertaken to identify and tease out all of the issues to which Councillor Mark Wilson made reference. The Council was trying to communicate as much as possible, and he pointed out that there would be more opportunities for Members to be engaged in further member briefings and so, hopefully, there would be every opportunity to scrutinise the process further. Councillor David Webster enquired whether the Joint Committee meetings would be open to the public. The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) advised that, assuming the SCO was approved in March, the first meeting would likely be held at the end of March. She explained that there was one report regarding designation of statutory officers which may need to be considered in private. Apart from that, the reports would probably be considered in public.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the establishment of the Westmorland and Furness Joint Committee, as detailed in the report, and the terms of reference attached at Appendix 1 to the report be agreed;
- (2) the Non-Executive Functions within the Terms of Reference be delegated to the Westmorland and Furness Joint Committee;
- (3) the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Chairman, be delegated the making of any minor changes to the terms of reference following consideration by other councils making up the Joint Committee;
- (4) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution and to update the Council's Scheme of Delegation in Part 3 of the Constitution;
- (5) the following nominations be received and those appointments be made to the positions on the Westmorland and Furness Joint Committee in accordance with the political representation / balance calculation:-  
  
Councillors Jonathan Brook, John Holmes and Andrew Jarvis;
- (6) South Lakeland District Council will act as the host authority; and
- (7) this Joint Committee is the Westmorland and Furness Joint Committee for the purposes of the Cumbria (Structural Changes) Order 2022.

## **C/100**

### **COUNCIL PLAN AND POLICY FRAMEWORK - TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder, presented the report which was concerned with South Lakeland's legacy. It sought to make sure that, in the Council's final year, during the transition to

the establishment of Westmorland and Furness Council, efforts were focused on critical areas of delivery which would be a strong legacy and provide firm foundations on which the new authority could build. It sought to ensure that the Westmorland and Furness Shadow Authority gave full consideration to the vision and priorities of South Lakeland and its communities in developing its strategy and policy framework. The report highlighted the method and criteria, which involved a Project Portfolio Management Approach which had been adopted in prioritising the Council's work during the remainder of its existence.

Councillor Brook drew attention to a number of key priorities which were intended to be completed by vesting day:-

- the final few stages of the Customer Connect project including the completion of the final phase of the refurbishment of South Lakeland House;
- Covid response including Track and Trace and the distribution of grants;
- the master plan for the GSK site in Ulverston;
- the completion of the roundabout at Cross-a-Moor, Swarthmoor;
- the completion of works to New Road and Gooseholme Bridge; and
- Phase 1 of the provision of EV charging points.

Councillor Brook took the opportunity to confirm that the suite of legal agreements for the Cross-a-Moor junction improvement project had been completed on the previous day. Together with the Growth Deal Funding Agreement from 2021, the suite comprised three agreements for the Council's receipt of external funding and one agreement for the outgoing contribution to National Highways. All agreements had required skilful negotiation because of their interdependencies and the need to manage the risks in the project's delivery. With the completion of the agreements, the Council will receive external funding of £5.2m and contribute up to a maximum of £6.3m to National Highways. National Highways will contribute £4.9m towards the scheme. Councillor Brook thanked all the officers involved in this complex process and for work with the Council's partners. South Lakeland District Council had been fundamental in assembling the funds without which the scheme would not have proceeded. Once completed later this year, it would unlock the allocated development sites, enabling the delivery of around 1,000 homes of which 355 would be affordable. Councillor Brook felt that this was a great example of the ambition of this Council to deliver the best outcomes for its communities and for its tenacity in seeking to deliver those ambitions, even when there were significant challenges. It was exactly this spirit and ability that the Council wanted to see transfer to the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

Some other projects likely to be completed included disabled toilet improvements at Millerground and Cartmel, Kendal Market Lift, the conversion of redundant premises at Ellerthwaite depot to offices, improvements to Rothay Park toilets, flood alleviation works at Windermere Road, Grange and energy saving measures at Ferry Nab.

There were also a number of projects and programmes which were likely to be handed on to Westmorland and Furness Council for continuation and/or completion. These included:-

- the final completion of works to Grange Promenade and Lido;
- completion of the South Lakeland Local Plan to include a review of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Community Infrastructure;
- delivery of the Homes England site at Croftlands and the wider Croftlands development;

- the Affordable Housing programme including schemes promoted through the Community Housing Fund and proposals being developed for use of Right to Buy receipts;
- Cumbria Choice;
- the Disabled Facilities Grants programme;
- work to promote financial inclusion and establishment of a Poverty Truth Commission;
- participation in National Park and AONB partnerships;
- measures associated with delivering Fairer South Lakeland including a Poverty and Truth Commission;
- implementation of the Carbon Reduction Action Plan;
- arts and events funding and improvements to Abbot Hall;
- completion of Kendal Flood Defences;
- implementation of recommendations of Kendal Parking Study and future of Westmorland Centre car park;
- Ulverston Place Programme;
- Ulverston Leisure Centre associated with the GSK master plan; and
- Economic Development Strategy.

Councillor Brook believed that, overall, South Lakeland District Council would leave a long legacy for the future and he moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Giles Archibald referred to Appendix 1 to the report and a conflation in the priority between biodiversity loss and climate change, pointing out that the Council had been very clear on the fact that these were separate issues. He, therefore, proposed an amendment to the recommendation for that priority so that it read, "Recommend to WCF that demanding climate change targets for Westmorland and Furness be adopted and that innovative and far-reaching action plans for both the climate and biodiversity crises be implemented."

Both Councillors Brook and Ashcroft, as proposer and seconder, were willing to accept this amendment as it sought to clarify the basis of this section. The Chairman confirmed the agreement of the meeting to this.

Councillor Roger Bingham expressed concern with regard to the future of the Cumbrian archives and Councillor Brook explained that this would be examined and addressed by the appropriate work stream moving forward. Councillor Brook undertook to try to provide an update in order to reassure Councillor Bingham. Councillor Mark Wilson questioned whether the key priorities listed followed on promises made and felt disappointed at aspects of the Masterplan for the former GSK site in Ulverston, concerned that those promises may not come to fruition. Councillor Archibald thanked the Chairman, officers and Cabinet for their tremendous work this past few months and years in terms of responding to pandemic and doing all they could to keep residents safe. He felt he spoke on behalf of all Members of the Council in thanking officers who were working under a lot of stress and referred to all of the work being carried out. Councillor David Webster referred to the projects likely to be handed on to the Westmorland and Furness Council for continuation and/or completion and in particular to Ulverston Leisure Centre associated with the GSK Masterplan. He appreciated that GSK would give the Council £2 million to put towards Phase 1 but pointed out that by using the land at GSK for industrial purposes, the Council was increasing health inequalities. He expressed strong disappointment that the Council was not going to progress phases 2 and 3; and that this would be left up to the new council. Councillor Brook said that he did not recognise the picture that was being painted by

Councillor Webster, reminding Members that this item would be discussed in detail later on in this evening's Agenda. He pointed out, however, that the Council was pushing ahead with investment in a way that it was able to manage within the circumstances that had presented themselves and was moving forward in a way that would enable commencement of works to start. Clearly those works would take some time as had been mentioned and that timeframe might be longer than the length of South Lakeland District Council but rather than passing the buck, the Council was taking action. Councillor Brook felt that Councillor Webster should take some comfort from this.

A vote was taken on the substantive motion and it was

**RESOLVED – That**

- (1) the interim priorities set out in 3.8 to 3.10 in the report and outlined above be approved;
- (2) the Westmorland and Furness Shadow Authority be requested to consider the priorities and proposals set out in Appendix 1 to the report in developing the Policy Framework for the new authority; and
- (3) the recommendation for the Climate Change and Biodiversity Priority at Appendix 1 to the report be amended to read, "Recommend to WCF that demanding climate change targets for Westmorland and Furness be adopted and that innovative and far-reaching action plans for both the climate and biodiversity crises be implemented."

## **C/101**

### **CORPORATE FINANCE UPDATE QUARTER 3**

The Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, presented the third quarter financial monitoring report of 2021/22. The report provided the projected year end position based on performance to the end of Quarter 3 and officers' planned actions to ensure a balanced budget by the end of the financial year.

The report and appendices included details relating to the revenue budget, capital expenditure, collection of Council Tax and business rates and the Council's current position with regard to debt collection.

Appendix 1 set out the revenue variances to date, highlighting the best estimate of additional costs and loss of income from Covid-19 for 2021/22 which were £570,600 which suggested a saving against the contingency budget of £126,900. Regarding the Business as Usual (BAU) position, there was a projected overspend of £46,000 which was likely to be closed as the year end approached.

Appendix 2 set out the position on the capital programme. Following a review of the capital programme in the autumn of 2021, the programme was now valued at £14.602 million for 2021/22, with nearly £5 million being spent as at 31 December 2021. It was felt that most of the budget would be spent before the end of the financial year due to grants where agreements had been close to being finalised.

Table 4 in the report set out Local Taxation Collection rates which remained low but included more payment plans.

Councillor Jarvis, in closing, said that the report highlighted that the Council continued to be in a good financial position, despite the impact of the pandemic, and was heading to close to a balanced budget in the year. He thanked officers for their work on this and moved the recommendation contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Doug Rathbone.

Councillor David Webster referred to Appendix 2 to the report and reference to the Ulverston Bank Clock, expressing concern that the scheme appeared to be in the budget for 2023/34 by which time South Lakeland District Council would no longer exist. The Chairman undertook to ensure that a written response was provided.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and Appendices 1 to 3 thereto be noted.

## **C/102**

### **ULVERSTON LEISURE SITE**

Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder, presented the report informing Members that, following Cabinet's consideration of the Ulverston Leisure Site at its meeting on the 9 February 2022, Cabinet had recommended to Council that it consider approving the receipt of a financial contribution of £2 million from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK). Approval would see the first phase of development progress which would enable the relocation of uses from the GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) sports site to Priory Road. This would release land for future employment use. Further project development work on phases 2 and 3 would enable the Westmorland and Furness Council to determine an appropriate strategy for provision and reinvestment in leisure facilities.

The rationale for the scheme was summarised as:-

- Investment in Place – providing a good leisure and sports offering, promoting the benefits of Ulverston as a place to live, work and invest.
- Improving Health – providing facilities and programming which promote active lifestyles
- Employment Land Use – opportunity for the re purposing of land at the GSK site to support future employment use, enabled by the relocation of facilities at Priory Road.
- Sustainable Facilities – addressing reinvestment in aging facilities, reducing cost and environmental impact, extending community participation in the provision and operation of facilities.
- Responding to Current Circumstances – as part of proposals which mitigate the impacts of change at the GSK site

Recent study work had recommended a phased approach to the proposals. In summary:-

Phase 1 would include; the provision of three football pitches, changing facilities, remodelling of the indoor tennis centre, provision of the crown green bowling green, and the informal running route. This was estimated to cost in the region of £1.8m and would be enabled by the GSK financial contribution. A delivery period of circa 12-15 months would be required from commencement to all the facilities being available.

Phase 2 would include; the provision of the swimming pool, car parking re modelling, and further internal work to the tennis centre. This was estimated to cost in the region of £5.4m and would require the new facility's business plan to provide revenue which supports prudential borrowing, together with potential for grant funding. A delivery period of circa 18 months would be required from commencement.

Phase 3 would include; refurbishment of the existing all weather hockey pitch and refurbishment of the outdoor tennis courts. This was estimated to cost in the region of £0.3m and would require the new business plan to provide revenue which supported prudential borrowing, together with potential for grant funding. A delivery period of circa 2 months would be required from commencement.

As part of the process of Local Government Reorganisation, Government was likely to make Directions on the expenditure of the existing Councils for the period between the Structural Changes Order coming into effect and prior to vesting day. The effect of these Directions would likely require the written consent of the Shadow Authority's Cabinet prior to entering contracts which involved capital expenditure above £1m or revenue to a commitment above £100k where they extended beyond 2022/23.

Cabinet had approved the option to progress Phase 1 to implementation. This option enabled earlier delivery of benefits, including the future repurposing of the GSK land for employment use. It enabled and secured the application of financial contribution from GSK and reduced risk of the potential for closure of sporting facilities.

Cabinet had further approved the option to continue project development work on Phases 2 and 3. This option enabled further development work to ascertain greater cost certainty, funding and associated contractual change. This work would be required to fully inform future options for the Council's facilities and leisure provision in Ulverston and helped mitigate the risks from the increased aging of facilities. It would enable options to be considered by the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

Councillor Ashcroft, in presenting the report, referred to Local Government Reorganisation and to the effects of the pandemic. He pointed out that there had been no promise on the project and that it had been an ambition. Costs had increased and the Council was looking to fund this capital amount through prudential borrowing based on the Leisure Provider's business plan. Whilst everyone was disappointed, the Council was setting up the project as well as it could. Councillor Ashcroft reminded Members that when Ulverston Town Council had been asked for a fairly modest contribution, nothing had been forthcoming. He moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Pete Endsor.

Councillors Mark Wilson, Judy Filmore, David Webster and Shirley-Anne Wilson all expressed great concern. Councillor Mark Wilson pointed out that the Council had been dealing with this issue for ten years. He felt that what had happened with Covid-19 should make the Council more determined to push through the plans which had been promised. Ulverston had been promised £9 million which would be the biggest investment ever put forward by the Council. Councillor Mark Wilson pointed out that Ulverston Town Council had offered to discuss commitments and contributions and believed that what Councillor Ashcroft had said regarding no contribution from the Town Council was incorrect. Ulverston was keen to see Phase 2 carried out in the year commencing April 2022 and he asked Members to reconsider. Councillor Ashcroft believed that, to the best extent of his knowledge, what he had said regarding no contribution from Ulverston Town Council was correct. Councillor Filmore said that, as an Ulverston Councillor, she had been pleased that this project had reached the stage that it had. As a Green, she was disappointed - this had been a

golden opportunity to ensure that the Council was meeting its green goals – there was hardly any mention of energy efficiency measures. She highlighted that other councils were doing more with their leisure sites to meet energy efficiency / net zero. Councillor Filmore sought reassurance that net zero goals were prominent in the new Authority's goals. Councillor Ashcroft pointed out that it was not within the Council's gift to make promises on behalf of the new Authority. However, he felt sure that these issues would be taken into consideration in Phase 2. Councillor Webster said that the original costings had been £2 million from GSK, £9 million from South Lakeland District Council, with a shortfall of £2.5 million. Ulverston Town Council had been asked to contribute £0.5 million pounds through CIL money and prudential borrowing. He explained that the Town Council had been unable to afford this and, at that time, had made an offer £20,000, to be reviewed each year. He stressed that, as well as Phase 1, Phase 2 – the new swimming pool – should be brought in by South Lakeland District Council. Councillor Jarvis, Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, explained that it had been very clear when the proposals for the leisure centre came to Cabinet that the financing of the Council contribution, which was very significant, was based on prudential borrowing that could be justified by lower charges from the leisure provider due to income from the new pool. It was clear now that having gone through a major pandemic the financial situation of the Council's leisure provider was very different to what it had been several years previously and that the outlook for leisure was different. It was necessary to carry out significant work on the leisure contract to ascertain whether it would deliver savings that will give the Council the space to consider prudential borrowing. Legal work and planning work needed to be carried out in a process where the Council was facing a Section 24 Direction. Councillor Jarvis said that it was not practicable that a pool would be built in 13 months from now. This was the reality, but what the Council could do was prepare the groundwork and provide plans to the new Council. The Council would do that work and would move as quickly as it could. Councillor Shirley-Anne Wilson said that her residents felt very let down and that it was difficult for her to defend the Council because people were angry and did not understand. She felt let down as a councillor who works hard for her residents. The Vice-Chairman expressed confusion at the different figures which had been mentioned and asked for the actual figure that Ulverston Town Council was contributing, also enquiring if they had made a precept rise. Neither Councillor Jarvis nor Councillor Ashcroft were able to confirm. Councillor Mark Wilson informed Members that Ulverston Town Council had agreed in January to discuss contributions and commitments from that meeting and had spoken to senior officers about their willingness to become contributors to the scheme. He explained that to date no one had come back to them to discuss the matter. Councillor Ben Berry referred to years of having heard from opposition parties about how Ulverston got a raw deal and how this had always been robustly defended. He felt that to see the rug pulled out at this late hour was sad to see and only reinforced how Ulverston was being treated. Councillor Peter Thornton referred to the history of the matter and pointed out that there was not a council in the land without a project going over budget at the moment due to Covid-19, Brexit, material prices, etc. He believed that the issue under consideration was a consequence of the referendum in 2016.

Following lengthy debate, it was

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the receiving of a financial contribution of £2 million from GSK for replacement Leisure provision be approved; and
- (2) it be noted that the amendments to the Capital Programme in light of the revised estimated costs of the scheme and a phased approach to delivery are addressed in the 2022/23 Budget Report.

**C/103****REVIEW OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2022**

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, presented a report informing Members that on 1 April 2013, the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme had been abolished and replaced with a locally-determined scheme known as the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. South Lakeland District Council had introduced a scheme that mirrored the previous national scheme, which meant that nobody was worse off under the Local Scheme and that the most vulnerable people in the District were protected from any reductions in support.

After considering options for change, including the additional income, costs and risks associated with any changes, it was expected that the current Scheme would continue unchanged for the financial year 2022/23. This was with the exception of applying the annual upratings and other minor income and capital disregards.

The report had also been through Cabinet which had recommended that Council approve the Scheme.

Councillor Jarvis felt that approval of the Scheme was critical as it provided vital help to many of the poorest and most vulnerable members of South Lakeland's community. He moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor David Webster.

Members expressed strong support for the Scheme and in particular Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Poverty Alleviation Portfolio Holder, who drew attention to the fact that South Lakeland District Council remained one of only a handful of local authorities offering up to 100% Council Tax reduction, which went beyond its statutory obligation.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED – That**

(1) the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme be approved and adopted, it being the most appropriate scheme for this Council for the financial year commencing 1 April 2022, subject to the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, being authorised to:-

(a) make all necessary updates to this Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme to comply with any statutory requirements that may be issued by Central Government;

(b) make all necessary amendments to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme to uprate the allowances and premiums in accordance with the HB Circular A11/2021 regarding annual upratings issued in December 2021 by the Department of Work and Pensions; and

(c) publish the updated scheme in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 2012; and

(2) any work on a further Scheme be carried out as part of the Local Government Reorganisation work streams for the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

**C/104 ADJOURNMENT**

Councillor David Webster having proposed, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, having seconded, and a vote having been taken, the meeting adjourned for a break at 8.05 p.m. and reconvened at 8.15 p.m. A roll call was taken and the same Members were present, with the exception of Councillors Caroline Airey and Roger Bingham.

**C/105 2022/23 TO 2026/27 BUDGET**

The Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, took pleasure in presenting the 49<sup>th</sup> and final budget of South Lakeland District Council. He was pleased to say that the budget showed that the Council continued to be in good financial health, continued to deliver a high level of services and would keep investing for the residents in its area. Councillor Jarvis drew attention to the unusual situation whereby this Council would not continue in its current form beyond 1 April 2023. However, it was still necessary for the Council to plan, agree and monitor a budget for next year while the Council retained its role. Furthermore, planning for subsequent years was an important input into building the budget of the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

The report firstly considered the Chief Finance Officer's advice on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves under the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.

After consideration of the above, Council was being asked to consider the recommendations from Cabinet to determine the Council's 2022/23 Five Year Budget, including fees and charges, the capital programme and the pay policy statement. A balanced budget for 2022/23 was presented, including an increase in Council tax of 1.5%.

The expected outcome was that Council will be in a position to deliver the priorities set out in the Council Plan within its resources.

Cabinet, on 14 December 2021, had approved the re-profiling of the 2021/22 – 2025/26 capital budgets which formed part of the draft capital programme. The final draft revenue budget and capital programme had been considered by Cabinet on 9 February 2022. The local government finance settlement had been announced in late December and, as expected, delayed the reduction in income expected as part of reform of local government funding until at least April 2023.

The successful implementation of staffing changes as part of Customer Connect had permanently delivered savings of over £1.5m. However, subsequently, the Council had seen one-off costs around Covid-19 and Local Government Reorganisation, short-term, demand-driven pressures and inflation, particularly on fuel, which had created significant new pressures and gaps in the budget. The budget presented a balanced budget for 2022/23, with significant deficits from 1 April 2023. Options were being developed to balance future budget deficits.

Councillor Jarvis referred to Recommendation (5) in the report regarding the latest Collection Fund Estimates and advised that there were no changes to report regarding the Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Police element.

Councillor Jarvis summed up, saying that despite the many challenges faced by the Authority, this budget showed that the Council was entering into reorganisation in sound financial health, whilst not increasing Council Tax by the maximum permitted by statute. This confirmed the Section 151 Officer's statement in Section 9.12 of the report.

Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendations contained within the report, thanking officers for their work on ensuring that the Council had a strong and robust programme and the Finance Team for preparing this budget. He particularly thanked the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) for her support and dedication and hoped that she could take a moment to reflect with pride on her final budget report for South Lakeland District Council. He was seconded by Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder.

Councillor David Webster expressed disappointment regarding what he felt to be discrepancies in funding between Ulverston and Kendal. The Vice-Chairman echoed thanks to the Finance Team for their work and for the inclusion of the Dean Gibson School project in the budget, along with the many other fantastic projects being undertaken by the Council in both Kendal and Ulverston and other communities within the District. Councillor Philip Dixon, Customer and Locality Services Portfolio Holder, took the opportunity to flag up the £1,000 Member Locality Budget, pointing out that this was the tenth year in which Members had been able to use this money to the benefit of their local communities. Councillor Jonathan Cornthwaite also paid tribute to officers for their work and Councillor Jarvis' good head for figures, and drew attention to the money which had been made available towards the Kendal Flood Relief Scheme. Councillor Peter Thornton expressed pride in South Lakeland District Council's handling of its finances and the legacy which would be carried into the new Council.

Councillor Brook, as seconder, said that this was a historic budget which delivered for people across the District, and commended the Council's forward thinking in investing in projects and spending to save, for example through the Customer Connect Programme.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and the Council's Rules of Procedure, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:-

The following Members voted in favour (32) – Councillors Giles Archibald, Robin Ashcroft, Rupert Audland, Jonathan Brook, Helen Chaffey, Jonathan Cornthwaite, Tracy Coward, Philip Dixon, Pete Endorsor, Judy Filmore, Gill Gardner, Fiona Hanlon, Eamonn Hennessy, Hazel Hodgson, Chris Hogg, Rachael Hogg, Vicky Hughes, Ali Jama, Andrew Jarvis, Helen Ladhams, Malcolm Lamb, Susanne Long, Pete McSweeney, Ian Mitchell, Suzie Pye, Doug Rathbone, Matt Severn, Peter Thornton, Heather Troughton, David Webster, Ian Wharton and Mark Wilson.

The following Members voted against (3) – Councillors Ben Berry, Ben Cooper and Kevin Lancaster.

The following Members abstained (6) – Councillors Pat Bell, Brian Cooper, Tom Harvey, John Holmes, Kevin Holmes and Helen Irving.

**Note - Those Members in attendance at the start of the meeting and who are not accounted for in the recorded vote above had left the meeting prior to consideration of this item of business.**

RESOLVED – That

- (1) prior to the approval of the 2022/23 Budget, the Chief Finance Officer's Statutory Report, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted and the approach to risk and reserves set out in the Report be endorsed;
- (2) a Budget Requirement of £9,588,500 for 2022/23, as set out in Section 2b of the Draft Budget Book (Appendix 2 to the report) be adopted;
- (3) a 1.5% increase in Council tax, increasing the Band D Council Tax to £207.61 for District Council Services for 2022/23 be approved as part of a balanced revenue budget;
- (4) the detailed service budgets as set out in Section 3 of the Draft Budget Book be approved;
- (5) the latest Collection Fund Estimates, Parish Council precepts and Parish Council taxes for 2022/23, as set out in Section 4 of the Draft Budget Book, be noted;
- (6) the Capital Programme and funding, as set out in Section 5 of the Draft Budget Book, be approved;
- (7) the Reserves as set out in Section 6 of the Draft Budget Book be approved;
- (8) the Fees and Charges Book for 2022/23 (Appendix 3 to the report) be approved;
- (9) the Statutory Pay Policy Statement (Appendix 4 to the report) be adopted and published;
- (10) the existing delegation to the Chief Executive and the Directors to manage and deal with all people, welfare, inclusivity and training issues below Chief Officer level, including making changes within the establishment, within Directorate areas, provided that all decisions are within Council policies and approved budgets, be noted;
- (11) delegation for the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to apply any funding received from the LGR Implementation Reserve be approved;
- (12) the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 5 to the report) and Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment (Appendix 6 to the report) be noted; and
- (13) it be noted that the proposals contained in this report have been incorporated into the Procurement Schedule, Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Framework elsewhere on the agenda.

**C/106****CALCULATING AND SETTING THE 2022/23 COUNCIL TAX**

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, presented a report to enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2022/23.

The precepts from Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner had been confirmed, at the values previously proposed, on 10 and 16 February 2022 respectively.

As the billing authority, South Lakeland District Council was required to undertake a series of calculations in order to determine the Council Tax to be set for each parish within the District. Once the Council Tax had been approved, Council Tax bills would be issued to each household in South Lakeland during March 2022 in accordance with the amounts set, subject to any reductions for discounts, exemptions or reliefs.

Councillor Jarvis drew attention to the impact on the average Band D Council Tax which would rise from £2,014.68 to £2,060.66. Of the increase of just under £46, 65% was accounted for by the Adult Social Care Charge for Cumbria County Council, 22% by the Police and Crime Commissioner precept, with the remainder split equally between South Lakeland District Council and parishes.

Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and the Council's Rules of Procedure, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:-

The following Members voted in favour (37) – Councillors Giles Archibald, Robin Ashcroft, Pat Bell, Jonathan Brook, Helen Chaffey, Ben Cooper, Brian Cooper, Jonathan Cornthwaite, Tracy Coward, Philip Dixon, July Filmore, Fiona Hanlon, Tom Harvey, Eamonn Hennessy, Hazel Hodgson, Chris Hogg, Rachael Hogg, John Holmes, Kevin Holmes, Vicky Hughes, Helen Irving, Ali Jama, Andrew Jarvis, Helen Ladhams, Malcolm Lamb, Kevin Lancaster, Susanne Long, Pete McSweeney, Ian Mitchell, Suzie Pye, Doug Rathbone, Matt Severn, Peter Thornton, Heather Troughton, David Webster, Ian Wharton and Mark Wilson.

There were no votes against.

There were no abstentions.

***Note - Those Members in attendance at the start of the meeting and who are not accounted for in the recorded vote above had left the meeting prior to consideration of this item of business.***

It was unanimously

RESOLVED – That

(1) it be noted that on 17 December 2021, under powers delegated under Paragraph 3.1 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) calculated the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2022/23 by means of an Administrative Decision:-

(a) for the whole of the District as 46185.17 (Item T in the formula in Section 31(B) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the Act"), as amended); and

(b) for each part of the Council's area:-

ALDINGHAM	550.74	LAMBRIGG	44.33
ANGERTON	7.78	LEVENS	578.26
ARNSIDE	1,166.76	LINDALE AND NEWTON IN CARTMEL	427.12
BARBON	135.64	LONGSLEDDALE	42.34
BEETHAM	895.28	ALLITHWAITE AND CARTMEL	906.37
BLAWITH & SUBBERTHWAITE	134.38	LOWER HOLKER	717.70
BROUGHTON EAST	146.34	LOWICK	128.97
BROUGHTON WEST	453.19	LUPTON	88.35
BURTON IN KENDAL	643.64	MANSERGH	77.00
CARTMEL FELL	242.73	MANSRIGGS	21.36
CASTERTON	185.08	MIDDLETON	54.90
CLAIFE	226.49	MILNTHORPE	724.81
COLTON	482.43	NATLAND	566.91
CONISTON	472.70	NETHER STAVELEY	325.07
CROOK	213.14	NEW HUTTON	178.36
CROSTHWAITE & LYTH	388.25	OLD HUTTON & HOLMESCALES	181.32
DENT	349.98	OSMOTHERLEY	121.10
DOCKER	27.30	OVER STAVELEY	221.97
DUNNERDALE	85.02	PENNINGTON	760.05
EGTON WITH NEWLAND	388.36	PRESTON PATRICK	187.85
FAWCETT FOREST	15.49	PRESTON RICHARD	580.68
FIRBANK	62.89	SATTERTHWAITE	136.40
GARSDALE	127.71	SCALTHWAITERIGG	44.98
GRANGE	2,170.88	SEDBERGH	1,078.62
GRAYRIGG	106.95	SEDGWICK	190.65
HAVERTHWAITE	377.55	SKELSMERGH	165.30
HAWKSHEAD	336.32	SKELWITH	115.81
HELINGTON	171.30	STAINTON	150.75
HEVERSHAM	359.12	STAVELEY IN CARTMEL	282.67
HINCASTER	104.36	STRICKLAND KETEL	501.74
HOLME	589.20	STRICKLAND ROGER	150.19
HUGILL	240.09	TORVER	84.68
HUTTON ROOF	112.76	ULVERSTON	4,186.16
KENDAL	10,730.14	UNDERBARROW	211.91
KENTMERE	64.65	URSWICK	620.66
KILLINGTON	81.45	WHINFELL	77.52
KIRKBY IRELETH	527.94	WHITWELL & SELSIDE	99.02
KIRKBY LONSDALE	940.81	WINDERMERE	4,060.94
LAKES	2,465.21	WITHERSLACK	312.30
		<b>Total</b>	<b>46,185.17</b>

(2) the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for the financial year 2022/23 (excluding parish precepts) be calculated as £9,588,503.00. No costs are to be treated as special expenses;

(3) the following amounts be calculated for the financial year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act, as amended by the Localism Act 2011:-

(a) £59,285,559.00 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils;

(b) £47,768,113.00 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act; including Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates;

(c) £11,517,446.00 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated in accordance with section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R - P in the formula in Section 31B of the Act);

(d) £249.38 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R) all divided by Item T(1(a) above) calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including parish precepts);

(e) £1,928,943.00 being the aggregate of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Appendix 2); and

(f) £207.61 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its District to which no parish precept relates.

(4) the amounts to be taken into account in respect of each category of dwellings listed in a particular valuation band be calculated by multiplying the amounts at 3(f) above by the proportion set out in section 5(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as being applicable to each valuation band and dividing by the proportion applicable to Band D:-

	<b>BAND A £</b>	<b>BAND B £</b>	<b>BAND C £</b>	<b>BAND D £</b>	<b>BAND E £</b>	<b>BAND F £</b>	<b>BAND G £</b>	<b>BAND H £</b>
<b>South Lakeland District Council</b>	138.41	161.47	184.54	207.61	253.75	299.88	346.02	415.22

(5) the amounts to be taken into account in respect of each category of dwellings listed in a particular valuation band for each of the Council's areas be calculated by adding to the amounts at 3(f) the amounts the parish precepts relating to dwellings in those parts of the district mentioned below divided in each case by the relevant amount at 1(b) calculated in accordance with section 34(3) of the Act as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the district to which parish precept relate and in the proportion set out in section 5(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as being applicable to each valuation band and dividing by the proportion applicable to Band D, as set out at Appendix 1 to these minutes;

(6) it be noted that the County Council and the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner have provisionally issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Act for each category of dwellings in the Council's district as indicated in the table below:-

	<b>BAND A £</b>	<b>BAND B £</b>	<b>BAND C £</b>	<b>BAND D £</b>	<b>BAND E £</b>	<b>BAND F £</b>	<b>BAND G £</b>	<b>BAND H £</b>
<b>CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL</b>								
<b>Main Precept</b>	893.95	1,042.95	1,191.94	1,340.93	1,638.91	1,936.90	2,234.88	2,681.86
<b>Adult Social Care Element</b>	124.71	145.50	166.28	187.07	228.64	270.21	311.78	374.14
<b>TOTAL CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL</b>	1,018.66	1,188.45	1,358.22	1,528.00	1,867.55	2,207.11	2,546.66	3,056.00
<b>POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER</b>	188.10	219.45	250.80	282.15	344.85	407.55	470.25	564.30

(7) the amounts of Council tax payable in respect of each category of dwelling for the financial year 2022/23 be calculated as the aggregate of the amounts shown at (5) and (6) above in accordance with section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the results being as shown in Appendix 2 to these minutes; and

(8) it be determined that the Council's basic amount of tax for 2022/23 at (3)(f) is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Act of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. (The relevant basic amount of tax is the Council Tax Requirement for the Council's own purposes (see (2) above: £9,588,503) divided by the tax base (see (1) above: 46,185.17) which equates to £207.61. The equivalent figure for 2021/22 was £204.54. Therefore, the increase is 1.5% or £3.07. The Secretary of State has determined that any increase above £5.00 would be excessive. Therefore, the increase in the Relevant Basic Amount of Tax (the Council's own Council Tax excluding local precepts) is not excessive.)

## **C/107**

### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL STRATEGIES**

Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, presented a report setting out the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 to 2025/26 and the Capital Strategy for 2022/23 – 2033/34. The Strategies had been updated to reflect the 2022/23 Budget and Capital Programme which had been considered earlier in the meeting.

The draft strategies had been considered by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet prior to this version being presented to Council for approval.

Councillor Jarvis thanked all officers who had worked on the strategies, in particular the Finance Specialist who led on the work in this area and who had prepared the report. He moved the recommendations contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Doug Rathbone.

Members expressed thanks to the Finance Lead Specialist (Section 151 Officer) for wise investment and for keeping the Council's money safe and sound.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED – That the following be approved:-

- (1) the Treasury Management and Capital Strategies attached as appendices of the report; and
- (2) the authorised and operational borrowing limits set out within the report.

**C/108 PROCUREMENT SCHEDULE 2022/23**

The Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, Councillor Andrew Jarvis, presented the Procurement Schedule for 2022/23. There were 82 procurement projects identified, which was considerably lower than the 135 procurement exercises originally approved for 2021/22. It was thought that Local Government Reorganisation had focussed the departments on what was important in terms of Business as Usual.

Councillor Jarvis pointed out that the Schedule reflected the amount of work still being carried out by the Council. He thanked officers for their work and the Procurement Specialist specifically for her report which had also been reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and recommended to Council without comment.

Councillor Jarvis moved the recommendation contained within the report and was seconded by Councillor Giles Archibald who recommended that all Councillors review the contents of the Schedule which provided a view of what the Council was doing.

It was unanimously

RESOLVED – That the Procurement Schedule for 2022/23 attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

**C/109 URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items for consideration at the meeting.

**C/110 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CABINET QUESTION TIME (30 MINUTES)**

Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader and Promoting South Lakeland and Innovation Portfolio Holder, indicated that he had no further announcements to make this evening.

In accordance with paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3 of the Council's Rules of Procedure, the following written questions had been submitted to the meeting and were answered accordingly:-

From Councillor Vicky Hughes to Councillor Robin Ashcroft, Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder - *Could the portfolio holder of economy culture and leisure please update us on what the outlook for the SL economy is and what thinking is there behind its future?*

Councillor Ashcroft informed Members that the outlook was brighter for South Lakeland's economy than was first anticipated during the early stages of the pandemic. Covid-19 has undoubtedly had an impact, although some of this has been temporary and mitigated by financial support. The 40,000 grant payments made to businesses by the Council, totalling over £150m, had played a significant part in safeguarding jobs. Interestingly, there were now more businesses and jobs in South Lakeland than pre-pandemic levels.

The easing of Covid restrictions and greater clarity about the future had aided business planning and, according to the Council's latest annual business survey, 80% of businesses said they now felt confident about the next 12 months, compared to 50% the previous year.

However, while business resilience had been strong and consumer demand remained high, there remained challenges to business in terms of increased energy bills, cost of materials, importing and exporting goods, premises availability and staffing. Recruitment was reported as the biggest obstacle to growth across all sectors, with 10-20% of current vacancies unable to be filled.

While post Covid societal changes and the impact of Brexit had undoubtedly had an impact, it was recognised that there were systemic issues and South Lakeland had a particular millstone with the prevalence of second homes.

The Council saw addressing the declining working age population as a priority, and the attraction and retention of human capital as equally important as investment in physical infrastructure. The Council continued to work collaboratively with partners on the issue of skills and employment, as well as a number of strategic projects around the district, including Kendal Vision, GSK Ulverston, Cross-a-Moor Roundabout, Kendal Flood Scheme, Windermere Gateway and Grange Lido, all bringing millions of pounds of investment into the wider community of South Lakeland.

Placemaking was at the heart of the Council's thinking and it worked to enable groups such as Morecambe Bay Partnership, Kendal Futures, Sedbergh Economic Partnership and the Ulverston Town Team (Borderlands) to deliver on collective plans for the area. The Council saw cultural regeneration and the repurposing of empty spaces as key to sustaining town centre vibrancy and providing the creative spaces and housing its communities needed.

The Council also focussed on rural communities, an example being Grizedale Arts and their innovative work through the Farmer's Arms and the Valley Project on forward looking sustainable rural economies.

The Council strove to create the right conditions for business, through the delivery of strategic employment and housing sites within its Local Plan, and by working with partners including Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria LEP, Cumbria Action for Sustainability and Future Fixers, it provided essential business support to help growth sectors such as the creative industries, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and the green economy. The Council also provided investment into its strategic cultural partners to maintain and grow the District's rich cultural and heritage offering.

From Councillor Eamonn Hennessy to Councillor Suzie Pye, Health, Wellbeing and Poverty Alleviation Portfolio Holder - *With the current rise in cost of living in mind, what advice and help is available for residents in South Lakeland?*

Councillor Pye said that the year 2022 has been dubbed the Year of the Squeeze. The cost of living was at a 30 year high. The new social care levy on National Insurance and the freezing of the personal income tax allowance, would combine with high inflation, a rise in energy bills, and a rise in the cost of basic food items, all of which would likely impact low-income families the most. All this on the back of the Universal Credit uplift removal, plus whatever pre-pandemic struggles people were already dealing with. That painted a brief picture of the personal financial landscape that residents, friends, family, and neighbours were facing now and in months to come.

Councillor Pye turned to the help that was available.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme – it was important that residents were aware that this scheme existed and she drew attention to the earlier discussion, pointing out that up to 100% discount was available. But this was not automatic and had to be applied for, either online, or directly through the benefits team at SLDC. That team would also be able to look at eligibility for Housing Benefit, and discretionary housing payments.

The Council also offered the Green Homes Grant. This had gone live only a few weeks previously but there was a limited pot, so would need acting on sooner rather than later. The purpose of the scheme was to improve the energy efficiency of eligible households at no cost to the resident. It aimed to improve the warmth and comfort of their homes, whilst reducing energy bills, carbon emissions and levels of fuel poverty across Cumbria. There was up to £10,000 of funding available for home owners, and up to £5,000 for tenants of private rental accommodation. Full eligibility criteria was set out on the relevant page of the SLDC website. There was also of course Cold to Cosy Homes which had similar aims, but the eligibility criteria was different, and Councillor Pye urged Members to look at both schemes. Councillor Pye added that the Housing team at SLDC also had some funding to help in a situation where an individual was threatened with homelessness as a result of the impact of the pandemic.

A few weeks previously, the Council had confirmed funding for the next two years for South Lakes Citizens' Advice. The staff and volunteers there had worked tirelessly throughout the last two years, and they continued to do so, in order to offer help and support, to anyone who needed it, and to process all the applications and claims that went through their channels. They had also adapted their working practices and could now offer more flexibility by way of online consultations, as well as more telephone consultations. The Household Support Fund was administered through Citizens' Advice. This was a one off payment of usually £200 for low income families who were struggling to meet household bills. It was means tested, and the best way of accessing this fund was to contact South Lakes Citizens' Advice directly regarding specific residents, with their permission of course. These sticking plaster injections of cash were often a temporary fix, but the staff and volunteers at Citizens' Advice would then be in contact with the client and would be able to help identify any underlying financial issues, and check the person was accessing all the available help.

Councillor Pye drew attention to the brand new Kendal and District debt centre. They were partnered with Christians Against Poverty (CAP) and were a great source of help for anyone who was so far down the spiral of poverty that they really needed someone to take the time to sit with them in their own home, go through every bill, every debt, take it all away, and come back with one single payment plan, and a personal budget. This was a totally free service.

There was also the Holiday Activity and Food Programme, which was provision for Children in receipt of Free School Meals, to access food in the school holidays. Plans were underway via County Council officers, for the Easter and Summer holidays.

Lastly, Councillor Pye mentioned a new Government funded Council Tax Rebate, details of which were still being finalised, but she could confirm that South Lakeland District Council would be delivering one off payments of £150 to most families and individuals living in a property in Council Tax bands A, B, C and D. This was to help towards the cost of living, with particular reference to the rise in energy prices. The money did not need to be repaid. In most cases, the rebate would be paid directly into people's bank accounts, although those who did not currently pay their Council Tax via

direct debit would need to sign up separately. Officers estimated that, of the 34,500 properties in Council Tax bands A to D, around 11,500 were non-direct debit, so there would be quite a task to get the information out to those customers. Flyers would be produced shortly to raise awareness.

As well as all the help mentioned, Councillor Pye asked Members to remember that each ward would have their own localised schemes – food banks, food hubs, community hubs, school uniform recycling, local hardship funds.

Councillor Pye asked Members to talk to residents and to pass the information on to schools and churches and anywhere that could help. She said that this was just the beginning, and the sooner the need was matched with the help, the better.

Prior to reading out his written question, Councillor Giles Archibald expressed appreciation for the responses from Councillors Ashcroft and Pye and asked for Members to be provided with contact details of the organisations referred to by Councillor Pye.

*From Councillor Giles Archibald to Councillor Helen Chaffey, Housing Portfolio Holder - The Government has recently released its consultation on biodiversity gain requirements in new developments. This seems like an important consultation. Will SLDC be responding and do you have any initial thoughts on the proposals on which we are being consulted?*

Councillor Chaffey fully agreed that this was an important consultation. The rate of biodiversity and habitat loss was a global concern, was closely related to climate change, and its impacts were being seen locally. Managing the impacts of development on biodiversity was a critical part of the Council's response.

In anticipation of the Environment Act, the Council had had local planning policies on biodiversity net gain since 2019. The Development Strategy and Development Management Teams were working closely together on the rollout of these national requirements, including:-

- updating and tightening local plan policy through the local plan review (and seeking to ensure that the local plan was taken forward by the new authority);
- engaging with Natural England to review latest advice and best practice, with a view to drafting planning guidance;
- training planning policy and development management on biodiversity;
- preparing a section on biodiversity to add to the Council's Climate Action Plan;
- engaging with the pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cumbria so that it could feed into the development of planning policy and guidance; and
- responding to the consultation.

The fact that the Government was introducing national requirements on biodiversity net gain was welcome.

Councillor Chaffey said that Councillor Archibald was correct that the Government was consulting prior to preparing regulations on biodiversity net gain processes and monitoring. Matters included, how to define the existing biodiversity value of a site, what enhancements should be sought, under what circumstances offsetting biodiversity loss off site would be acceptable and requirements for monitoring.

In general terms, the introduction of biodiversity net gain was a welcome recognition of the importance of the issue. The proposed removal of the exemption for all brown field sites was also welcome.

The Council was carrying out detailed scrutiny of the many issues raised in the consultation proposals, including the exemption proposals and preparing a response with the intention of ensuring that net gain requirements would be as robust as possible.

There were wider issues related to the sustainability of development, including the wider carbon footprint of development. For housing development, energy efficiency was being addressed through the Future Homes standard (which the Council had also responded to). Changes to National Planning Policy would be proposed following COP 26.

Councillor Chaffey closed saying that the Council would continue to engage with the Government to help it ensure that new development was as sustainable as it could be in every sense.

Councillor Archibald asked a supplementary question, enquiring whether Councillor Chaffey had any thoughts on how to engage Members in Barrow and Eden in the process.

Councillor Chaffey felt sure that she could enable this.

From Councillor Hughes to Councillor Philip Dixon, Customer and Locality Services Portfolio Holder - *Could the portfolio holder of customer and locality services please update us on how this council is and has been managing sickness absences?*

Councillor Dixon welcomed Councillor Hughes back to the Chamber. He explained that the Council was well placed to respond to sickness absence and paid tribute to the Senior Management Team who provided a lead to staff in resilience in promoting resilience and compassion. The problems which had been faced as a result of Covid-19 over the past few months and years were mainly in terms of long term sickness absence as a result of delays in cancer treatment and operations which had put back returns to work.

Councillor Dixon informed Members that the Human Resources team regularly measured days lost through sickness absence and monthly reports were sent to Leadership Team. Managers also had access to run their own team's absence reports. In addition, managers were supported in monitoring and reducing levels of absence in their service area in line with the Council's attendance management policy.

The increased level of pro-active support available to employees, for example, included:-

- free confidential counselling;
- the Employee Assistance Programme;
- occupational health provision
- the Pay Care Health cash plan;
- the launch of the Mental Wellbeing at Work Policy;
- resilience workshops;
- the launch of Cheerful Tuesday wellbeing sessions;
- HR coffee mornings for Team Leaders;
- wellbeing surveys;
- targeted wellbeing team talks; and
- multiple wellbeing updates on Sharepoint.

The Council was continuing to manage absences through:-

- dedicated Human Resources team members paired up with managers to support with sickness cases;
- active day 1 care through the Council's employee assistance programme with stress related absence. With agreement from the employee a referral was made on day 1 of the absence. A qualified counsellor would arrange a call and agree a programme of activity with the employee. This supported with the identification of stress incidences on the first day of absence and appropriate support and prompt measures could be taken to deal with any issues leading to or causing stress absence;
- resilience training provided for all staff;
- Occupational Health service which staff could access;
- the Council's Employee Assistance Programme which provided a multitude of counselling options;
- the Council's Wellbeing at Work Policy. This provided useful tools to managers and employees to support with wellbeing activity;
- training on the Wellbeing Policy for managers;
- Management Team talks on wellbeing;
- the introduction of cheerful Tuesdays – non agenda meetings focused on wellbeing;
- Wellbeing page on SharePoint with useful tools and signposting;
- the Council's Smart Working Policy that allows all staff to be flexible in their work life balance;
- training provided to equip managers with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage sickness absence. The use of policies and procedures such as "Attendance Management", "Mental Health at Work" and "Smart Working"; and
- physiotherapy for staff in exceptional circumstances when the NHS waiting times are too long.

A full sickness yearly absence report would be provided to the Human Resources Committee at its next meeting in June 2022 which would provide a full break down of the yearly absence statistics.

Councillor Dixon thanked the Human Resources Committee for its continued concern and again expressed thanks for the resilience and compassion shown by the Management Team.

The written questions having been presented and answered, the following verbal questions were taken from the floor:-

Councillor Hughes explained that, having just returned following a period of absence, she had noticed the amount of work which had been carried out at South Lakeland House, and enquired as to the potential of tours for Members of the building.

The Chief Executive undertook to make suitable arrangements for any interested Members.

Councillor David Webster referred to the September meeting of the Planning Committee when he had asked if a meeting could be arranged following a site visit session regarding plans for future developments in relation to biodiversity. He sought an update on this.

The Chairman of the Council, also Chairman of the Planning Committee, advised that this session would be taking place following the meeting of the Planning Committee due to be held on Thursday, 24 February 2022.

The Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist (Monitoring Officer) reminded Members that this was Cabinet Question Time.

Councillor Peter Thornton asked Councillor Andrew Jarvis, Deputy Leader and Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder, if he could offer an explanation as to why Opposition Members had voted in favour of the Corporate Plan, however, had refused to support the Budget which would deliver the contents of the Plan.

Councillor Jarvis expressed a desire to comprehend, however, was unable to offer an explanation.

Councillor Fiona Hanlon asked Councillor Dixon whether there were any plans for Cheerful Tuesdays for Members.

Councillor Dixon undertook to discuss this suggestion with the Human Resources Team.

Councillor Hazel Hodgson asked Councillor Chaffey, given the current housing crisis, what help South Lakeland District Council was giving to people struggling to get on the housing ladder, both first time buyers and renters.

Councillor Chaffey undertook to provide a written response.

**C/111 QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR CHAIRMAN OF ANY COMMITTEE OR SUB-COMMITTEE**

No questions had been received under Rule 10.6 of the Council's Rules of Procedure.

**C/112 URGENT DECISIONS**

RESOLVED – That the details relating to an urgent Executive Decision taken since the meeting of Council on 11 November 2021, namely CEX/84 (2021/22) (Contract Award for Scaling On Street Charging Infrastructure), be received.

**C/113 EMERGENCY DELEGATED EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

RESOLVED – That the following Emergency Delegated Executive Decision taken by the Chief Executive, in accordance with the Leader's decision noted by Cabinet at CEX/04 (2019/20), be noted:-

- 018 19-01-22 Business Support Grants – Omicron Response January 2022.

The meeting ended at 9.24 p.m.