

**South Lakeland District Council**  
**Council**  
**Wednesday, 13 July 2022**  
**Customer and Locality Services Portfolio Holder**  
**Report**

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**Portfolio:** Cllr Eamonn Hennessy

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To work with all Members, the community and organisations in developing, case management, and specialist services as part of the Council's Customer Connect programme.

Delivery of the Council Plan objectives in relation to quality of service and high performance culture.

The organisation of the Authority relating to the Council's central services, including employee relations.

Providing and maintaining parks infrastructure.

To take the lead on Strategic Waste Management/Recycling and relevant Council Plan measures under the environment objectives.

To drive our Localism agenda.

**Policies, Plans and Strategies**

- Waste Management Strategy (environmental impacts)
- Emergency Plan
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Customer Charter and Contact Strategy
- Member Development and Training Plan
- Workforce Plan (to be reviewed under customer connect programme)

**Key Areas**

- Customer Services (operational)
- Emergency Planning
- Waste Management and Recycling Strategy
- Localism
- Water Quality
- Car Parking (operations)
- Waste Management (operations and service optimisation)

- Streetscene
- Member Services
- Member Training and Development
- Legal and Committee Services and HR Services
- Corporate Health and Safety

### **Customer Services (operational)**

A full report on the outcomes, benefits and future of Customer Connect was brought to Council in December 2020. The report recognised the achievements of the Customer Connect Programme since its inception in 2016.

In terms of how the remaining activity will be delivered, a Portfolio Management approach has been adopted. This combines a number of programmes including Customer Connect and Local Government Reorganisation with Business as Usual.

As part of the approach, the remaining Customer Connect activity has been reviewed with a focus on promoting digital channels and reducing customer demand. The plan continues to use the agile project management methodology of Scrum to deliver these outputs.

One of our main objectives is to utilise the digital platform to build more online forms that allow the customer to self-serve online and provide the organisation with greater efficiencies in the back office. Since March's update, we have delivered:

- an online application and back office process to support applications to hold events on our land that includes payment functionality,
- an online application to request a street sweep,
- an online application form to support the administration of the Fairer South Lakeland Fund,
- an application for request removal of an unwanted bin,
- an additional COVID relief fund grant form (built for both SLDC and EDC)

We currently have a number of word document and PDF forms on the website. We have started to review these forms to identify where we can quickly update them to an online form. These forms have been added to our scrum backlog and the first two will go live in July.

Since May 2020 we have gone live with 64 forms, including 15 forms specifically developed for processing COVID support grants. We also have a number of internal ESB forms which support information sharing between services.

We have a number of forms in development and in the coming months we will be going live with;

- report a commercial holiday let,
- request litter picking equipment,
- apply for a temporary event notice,
- send an invitation to the Chairman,
- report a grounds maintenance issue,
- apply to use the town all banner,
- report a damaged street sign,
- apply for a bulky waste collection

We are also capturing requirements to enable applications for a taxi vehicle license and a street naming and numbering application.

Our external communications to the customer on the benefits of using online services continue, with a focus on the customer being able to undertake specific activities. At the time of writing this report, we have 12,086 customers registered for a My Account.

The Customer Service Team are currently supporting calls for the £150 payment scheme and working with the Election Team to support the annual canvass.

### **Locality Services**

Work continues in the team to support the environmental, development management, housing and street scene services. Activity includes enforcement and investigations.

Key activity for the team in June was the support to Appleby Fair. Working in partnership to ensure safe travel for the Gypsy and Traveller communities to and from the fair. The team took part in litter picks to clean up the area after the event.

### **Emergency Planning**

The Council as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act is a Category One Responder. The Council continues to be an effective partner within the multi-agency Cumbria Local Resilience Forum (CLRF) and is involved in developing and enhancing emergency plans at CLRF level. This means participation within exercises to test and validate emergency plans - and also representation within the emergency incident 'command and control' structure for incidents – ie Strategic Coordinating Group which sets priorities, Tactical Coordinating Group which carries out planning – and Operational Coordinating Group which coordinates officers on the ground.

Fortunately there have been no incidents of note since the last update in March – probably reflecting the more stable weather at this time of year. Ahead of the autumn / winter period people may wish to think about property resilience and also to link in with and support any local Community Resilience Groups in their area. There are a growing number of Community Resilience Groups across South Lakeland – about 35 known groups to date.

### **Waste Management (Operations and Service Optimisation), Recycling Strategy, Localism and Street scene**

The Customer and Commercial Services and Climate Emergency and Localism portfolios have been working in partnership to support the waste management and street scene functions.

There has been an on-going campaign, in conjunction with Recycle4Cumbria, to promote waste reduction, particularly food waste.

Throughout the year, there have been numerous social media messages to promote recycling and waste minimisation; and over the Christmas period there was a focus on the seasonal changes to collection services and the recycling of seasonal waste.

The tonnage of waste and recycling collected has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels; however green waste remains at a very high level.

The service was pleased to work with Locality officers and Cumbria Constabulary with a litter campaign in Windermere. Ava; a pupil at St Martin & St Mary CE Primary School in

Windermere, designed a poster that so impressed Street Scene that it was enlarged and used on the side of a waste collection vehicle that operates in the Windermere area. This was in addition to the prize provided and the vehicle was also named Ava in her honour. The poster will now be seen by a larger audience around South Lakeland.

### **Private Drinking Water Supplies**

The Council undertakes a statutory function to carry out testing and risk assessments of private water supplies at various locations across the district, to ensure the safety of communities, implemented by the Private Water Supplies Regulations 2016. The Council has been continuing to undertake risk assessments and monitoring across all private water supplies in accordance with Covid-19 regulations and safety precautions. Where required, the Council continues to investigate any failure to meet standards and takes necessary enforcement action, always-ensuring communities are protected.

### **Car parking (operations)**

Visitor numbers are reducing back to pre-pandemic levels which has reduced the pressures on capacity, although still high, this has become more manageable. There are still options to increase via the Tactical Visitor Management Group (TVMG) to ensure sufficient resources and measures are in place if needed.

The improvement and repair works at the Westmoreland Multi Storey Car Park are on-going and should be complete mid-August. This project is going very well with very little inconvenience to users.

The EV charging installation is nearly complete and we can expect commission in the very near future, dates not confirmed.

### **Member Services and Member Training and Development**

A comprehensive suite of training and development opportunities for Councillors has been delivered either virtually or by eLearning.

Ongoing committee related inductions and refreshers continue to take place, to include:

- New member inductions
- New Members introduction to CMT and Cabinet
- Planning Committee induction and refresher
- Microsoft Teams induction
- Skype induction
- IT induction
- Climate Science Solutions Briefing
- Code of Conduct/How to Be an Effective Member training
- Licensing Committee induction and refresher/ Licensing Committee Decision Making and Taxi Licensing training
- HR Induction and refresher
- Audit Induction and refresher
- Social Value Portal/ Procurement Strategy Training
- Structural Changes Briefing
- Standards Committee Induction and refresher
- Overview & Scrutiny Induction and refresher
- Housing and Homelessness Introduction
- Charing Skills

- Online expenses training
- Committee related refresher training
- Risk Management

Further training throughout will continue in line with the training plan.

## **Legal Governance and Democracy Services**

### **LGR**

The Lead Specialist Legal Governance and Democracy is the Technical Lead for the Legal and Democratic work stream of LGR, reporting to Lawrence Conway who is the Chair of the Corporate and Enabling Board. The work of the Legal and Democratic work stream supports the Chief Executives Programme board.

In May 2022, the Shadow Authority appointed the Lead Specialist Legal Governance and Democracy as the Interim Monitoring Officer for the Westmorland and Furness Shadow Authority. The role is attending the Programme Board in rotation with the Interim Monitoring Officer for Cumberland.

The Legal and Democratic LGR work-stream has been working on delivering fourteen different work-streams – five of these were completed upon achieving Day Zero (including work-streams regarding the Structural Changes Order, elections and boundary review, joint committees and informal decision making). Delivery of Day Zero was a success.

The remaining Legal and Democratic work-streams have been re-set in line with the review by the Programme Board and have high volumes of work to progress. These work-streams include for example: Constitutions, Civic and Ceremonial, Members and Member Arrangements, Member Code of Conduct, Member Allowances, Contracts and Agreements and Models of Delivery. In addition, the work-stream provides legal advice and assistance across all LGR themes. Legal Governance and Democracy Specialists from the Council are members of and contribute to these work-streams. Project management is being put in place to support the work stream and the allocation of Day 1 readiness tasks is soon to take place. Linda Fisher has also been leading on the member induction and training and development plan for all new members of both Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Shadow Authorities.

We await the receipt of the Consequential Order from Government and will consider the draft once received. The SLDC legal team have attended various meetings with Government officials including for example relating to LGR and Lake Windermere.

Specialists from across the team are involved in various LGR-related work, including supporting the Council with complex matters arising in relation to Lake Windermere in addition to providing guidance and technical advice within the appropriate LGR work streams and working collaboratively alongside counterparts in other authorities at District and County level.

### **SLDC**

The Governance and Democracy team are working on increasing the use of the Mod.Gov committee system and have been promoting the use of the app to councillors and officers. Training will be provided on delegated decision making through the system aligned to the recent improvements made to the Councils Constitution. The team are working hard to implement agile functionality to the system. They are also proactively engaged in the LGR work.

The team advises and supports all the Council meetings to ensure good governance and transparency. The team have organised and delivered a number of Council and Committee meetings since the last report. All held face to face and we have supported officers, members and the public in attending the meetings. An increase in work relating to licensing has seen an increase in the number of licensing hearings.

A series of Council wide Governance awareness-raising sessions have been provided across the Council, delivered virtually for staff. Sessions that have been provided have included topics such as Governance and Accountability, the Forward Plan and Executive and Non-Executive decision-making. These have been received very well by officers who have attended the first sessions. Training has been delivered on the new Member Code of Conduct to all new members and existing members. Training has been provided on the Armed Forces Covenant by the Monitoring Officer for all staff and positive praise was received from members.

The Review of the Constitution is ongoing with this being treated as a 'living document' to review rather than an annual review approach.

The team continue to embed new ways of working and are continuing with their monthly Business Partnering meetings with each client services and feedback received from the services has been positive.

Litigation continues to be a busy area. The Council successfully defended an application for a litter abatement order made by a local resident. The decision was made to defend the application as the Council considered it complies with its statutory obligations through the carrying out of regular scheduled works in relation to land within the district, and as specified in the complaint, and that the programme of works were, and continue to be, both reasonable and practicable when taking into account the character and use of the land. The Council was awarded nearly all its costs in defending the application.

The team have worked towards the culmination of a prosecution that was laid in September 2019 following the tragic death of a four year old boy in a swimming pool at a caravan park owned by Holker Estates. Following Holker Estates Company Limited entering a guilty plea at the first hearing at the Crown Court and, latterly, prior to trial, Newmac Limited pleading guilty, sentencing took place on Friday 24 June at Preston Crown Court. Holker were fined £127,500.00 and Newmac £11,000.00. They were also ordered to pay costs of £27,402 and £5,000 respectively.

The Council successfully prosecuted an individual for driving a vehicle without the requisite drivers, vehicle or operators licences. Mr Sutton was found guilty of 3 offences with two charges being dismissed. Mr Sutton was fined a total of £380 (for the 3 offences), surcharge of £38 and ordered to pay £500 towards SLDC costs. The primary reason for bringing the prosecution was in the interests of public safety and the Judge specifically said that the vehicle should no longer be used in the way it has been in light of the findings.

The Legal team have been working with finance colleagues to reduce the debts arising around the Lake and as at the last Lake Administration Committee meeting in January it was reported that the total debt stood at £97,889, representing a significant decrease from the debt from £277,000. The debt figure at 31 March 2022 and reported to the Lake Administration Committee stood at £86,243.27. Therefore, the current debt position continues to improve.

The Legal team have been contributing towards the delivery of Corporate Priorities most recently providing advice to Officers regarding the latest Cabinet Reports, for example including the Sustainable Warmth Cumbria project (proposal to enter into agreement to

address fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency and carbon savings), the Levelling Up fund bid (co-ordinating subsidy control advice in relation to the Council's submission to be made to Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund for South Lakeland. If successful, this bid would bring significant investment into the district's principal service centre of Kendal, meeting the Council's aspirations in its Kendal Town Centre Strategy and delivering a vibrant, enhanced town centre for residents, businesses and visitors). . In addition, the legal team are continuing to support Officers with projects in Ulverston, in relation to Coronation Hall and land at Sandside (GSK). Since the date of the last report, land at Heversham (subject of a previous Cabinet report) has been purchased from the County Council and within the very tight timescale required by County.

In April the team completed the updated Partnering Agreement for the Cumbria Choice Partnership and arrangements to implement a sub-regional choice based letting scheme in Cumbria. This was a 12-party agreement between the members of the Cumbria Choice Partnership including all Cumbria district councils and a number of Registered Providers, including Home Group Limited, Castles & Coasts Housing Association Limited, South Lakes Housing Limited, Riverside Group Limited. As the lead authority for the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings ('CCBL') partnership, SLDC Legal Governance and Democracy team co-ordinated the Partnering Agreement alongside the new contract for the hosting and maintenance of the housing register, Choice Based Lettings and Customer Housing Portal system. As a result of completing these contracts, a new CCBL system went live in April 2022 for customers and an updated Policy also came into force bringing in long-awaited changes to improve the way social housing is allocated across Cumbria. The Council received thanks from Partner organisations and the RP CEO group for its hard work in relation to completing these contracts. Customer feedback has also indicated improved experience on the updated system.

In addition the team have been progressing other complex strategic matters including; advising on arrangements with Lakeland Arts and Abbot Hall and obtaining S24 direction advice; advising on matters relating to Gooseholme and New Road Common; governance advice on Council's Trust land and charity land and requesting external advice on subsidy control in connection with granting a long lease of Coronation Hall. Advice on LGR and the impact on the ownership of the Lakebed and the Lake Administration Committee has also been provided by legal officers. Legal services are also continuing to progress the EV Charging project and have recently instructed external legal advice regarding Subsidy Control.

Additionally, in the last four weeks three 106 Agreements/ Deeds of Variation have completed with five more agreed and expected to complete in the next four weeks. This assists external partners in the delivery of Affordable Housing for our Community. The team are delivering section 106 agreements and increasing the income receipts to the Council.

## **Human Resources**

The leadership development programme has been completed and comprised of an extensive training programme covering multiple areas of leadership development, strategic development and coaching amongst many other subjects.

The next tier in Leadership development is with our Team Lead population. The extensive training was finalised in May 2022 and covered an extensive learning package that supports Team Leads in the performance of their roles and their people management functions. Further follow up sessions are planned in September 2022 to feedback learning to the leadership team.

A new e-learning platform has been launched with hundreds of courses available for staff and members.

The corporate learning training has been taking place and courses include Microsoft skills in various modules, Change and Resilience, Commercial Flair and Presentation Skills amongst the courses that have been delivered so far.

Recruitment remains high and indicates a situation nationally with multiple organisations having multiple vacancies. We are however able to recruit to the majority of roles with some specialist roles taking slightly longer to fill.

The HR Team at SLDC is feeding into multiple HR and Organisational Development work streams within the LGR programme including recruitment to the programme office roles, developing FAQs for staff across the seven councils, TUPE, development of manager's communicating through change toolkits and pulse surveys and continue to feed into these work streams.

### **Corporate Health and Safety**

Throughout 2021-2022 our priority has been to keep people safe:

- During the pandemic we provided Covid safe elections and ensured staff, voters and Members could meet in environments which had all the available precautions in place
- Major works have taken place in Kendal Town Hall and South Lakeland House, safety issues have been dealt with on a daily basis and will continue – works are now fully handed over and complete - daily interventions take place
- Ensured vital services are provided safely to the residents of South Lakeland – we have liaised closely with staff in delivering services safely and created safer methods of working practice. We have provided advice and guidance and organised the correct PPE necessary for safer service delivery during the pandemic

We have promoted safety as a daily task to ensure we all stay safe. This has included the successful introduction of mandatory health and safety training – IOSH Working Safely –over 120 staff have now completed this.

We have analysed accidents/injuries to establish cause and then looked to eliminate or reduce these. We are currently working with district and County Council colleagues on the LGR group for Health and Safety towards ensuring both unitary authorities are compliant safe and legal for day 1.

The Health and Safety Advisor continues to maintain a visible presence in the workplace working with the Communications Team to find the most effective use of communication channels to regularly remind colleagues of the importance health and safety. We continue to disseminate information and update on topical issues to reinforce the message that promoting safety should be a daily task to ensure we all stay safe.

### **Tracking Information**

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date Signed off</b>
Section 151 Officer	N/A	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	01/07/22	01/07/22

<b>Circulated to</b>	<b>Date sent</b>
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	01/07/22
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	13/07/22