

Allerdale Borough Council

Council – 25 September 2019

Portfolio Holder Updates

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| The Reason for the Decision | To update Council on the activities and decisions of Portfolio Holders since the last meeting |
| Summary of options considered | N/a |
| Recommendations | That Members note the content of the report |
| Financial / Resource Implications | None arising directly from this report |
| Legal / Governance Implications | None arising directly from this report |
| Community Safety Implications | None arising directly from this report |
| Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications | None arising directly from this report |
| Equality Duty considered / Impact Assessment completed | Not considered applicable to this report |
| Wards Affected | As indicated in the main body of the report |
| The contribution this decision would make to the Council's priorities | Portfolio Holder activity relates to the development and delivery of the Council's key priority themes |
| Is this a Key Decision | No |
| Portfolio Holder | Councillor Marion Fitzgerald – Leader of the Council |
| Lead Officer | Senior Management Team |

Report Implications

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|------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Community Safety | N | Employment (external to the Council) | N |
| Financial | N | Employment (internal) | N |
| Legal | N | Partnership | N |
| Social Inclusion | N | Asset Management | N |
| Equality Duty | N | Health and Safety | N |

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide full Council with an update and overview of the activities of individual portfolio holders.

2.0 Content

The activities of the Portfolio Holders are as follows:

2.1 Leader of the Council: Cllr Marion Fitzgerald

Peer Challenge

By the time we come to Full Council, the Corporate Peer Challenge will have taken place. Grateful thanks to all staff and councillors who have contributed to the process. We await the team's report in due course.

Brexit

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) asked that Allerdale, along with all local authorities, designate a senior officer as Brexit Lead Officer, that role has been allocated to Paul Wood, Head of Customer Operations.

Paul is working with Brexit Lead Officers from the other Cumbrian Authorities, the Cumbria Resilience Forum (CLRF) and Allerdale Officers to ensure the authority, in line with relevant guidance from Government and its agencies, prepares locally for exit from the EU.

Council Plan

A considerable amount of work has been carried out on a new Council Plan setting out the aims and objectives of the present administration. We will consult widely on the new Plan in the coming months.

Collaboration

One of our aims in the future is to work more closely with Copeland Borough Council moving forward together to achieve a strong and sustainable economic future for West Cumbria. To this end, a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed by the two Local Authorities. Representatives of both attended the Convention of the North in Rotherham on 13 September to present a case to Ministers for Growth Funding for our area. This follows on from a successful and productive meeting with Henri Muirson, Director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership.

Stronger Towns Fund

It is great news that Workington has been included in the list for the Government's Stronger Towns' initiative. The Stronger Towns Fund is targeted at towns to create new jobs, help train local people and boost growth

with a potential for £25m grant funding. We look forward to working with the Government to bring about much needed investment into the town.

Town visits

Since the last meeting of Full Council, I have visited Cockermouth and Maryport to meet with local businesses and community leaders. I have also visited the Highfield Road Food Bank Distribution Centre and the new Flood Defences at James Walker of Cockermouth. I would like to congratulate the previous Leader for the support given to the James Walker Company which has enabled this company to remain local. I know that this is much appreciated.

Armed Forces artwork

Along with the Mayor of Allerdale, I was delighted to receive a sculpture created by Gen2 students as part of their coursework. This impressive piece of work commemorating the sacrifices of members of the Armed Forces has been given permanent place close to the flagpole at the entrance to the Council buildings.

Waste contract

We are pleased that an Interim Agreement has been signed with FCC, the Council's current Waste and Recycling partner. The duration of the Interim Agreement will allow sufficient time for the Council to prepare for the implementation of a long term solution which will ensure that we can move on from the problems experienced with services from 1 April 2019.

2.2 Deputy Leader: Economic Growth Portfolio: Cllr Mark Jenkinson

Taste Cumbria, Cockermouth 27-29 September 2019

The 10th anniversary festival is the first to be directly organised by ourselves – part of our strategy to further engage local communities and attract visitors to Allerdale. Up to one hundred traders will be taking part. New this year is a makers' market and street party in Market Place, Northbound music festival incorporated into the festival with a stage in Memorial Gardens, kids' activities (also in Memorial Gardens), as well as free, live music in Cockermouth pubs in the evening over the weekend.

The Solway Cumbrian Coast Guide

This new publication encourages residents and visitors to discover and explore 14 beaches in Allerdale. The guide produced in partnership with Solway Coast AONB, Solway Firth Partnership and Copeland Borough Council has been distributed to popular locations including tourism information centres as well as published on our visitor website.

Town Facelift Scheme – Aspatria and Silloth

The scheme offers financial support of up to £900 for retailers, homeowners, tenants and landlords to improve the external appearance of their properties. The budget is £50,000 this financial year and 40% has been allocated to date.

Tourism performance by town

A new analysis of 2018 tourism survey data has been undertaken to identify the value of the tourism economy by town area. The economic value of the sector for our whole borough was £468 million in 2018. The results reveal that 53% of tourism spend was in the Keswick area followed by 14% for Cockermouth, 12% for Silloth, and 7% for Workington. For Wigton it was 6%, 5% for Maryport and 3% for Aspatria.

Allerdale Sports Village

Discussions have been ongoing with representatives of Workington Town and Workington Reds and a joint project board has been established which will meet on a regular basis to consider and develop revised proposals for a new shared stadium and associated sporting facilities that will be available for use by the wider community as well as the two clubs. In addition to developing proposals for a smaller scale, more affordable stadium, it is hoped that some of the facilities previously proposed for inclusion with the stadium development can also be developed as part of a wider regeneration plan for the Lower Derwent Valley.

Maryport Regeneration

Some time ago the Maryport team submitted an Expression of Interest for funding from the governments Future High Street Fund. On 26 August it was announced that Maryport had been successful in becoming one of the additional 50 towns that will benefit from the £1 billion fund.

This funding can be used to improve transport and access into town centres, convert empty retail units into new homes and workplaces, and invest in vital infrastructure. This is excellent news for Maryport and will support Allerdale's existing regeneration plans for the benefit of the local community and visitors to the town. Next steps focus on the development of a fully costed business case for Maryport by Christmas followed by a competitive bidding process.

The work currently being undertaken by the team is driven by the Maryport Delivery Plan which was produced in 2018 by ARUP Consultants in conjunction with the Council and Britain's Energy Coast. In June the plan was entered into the North West Royal Town Planning Institute awards for Planning Excellence. The plan has been successful in being shortlisted and winners will be announced in October.

Following further communication from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) indicating that for projects to proceed successfully to business case stage they would need to have detailed planning approval, which is unlikely to be the case for the modular village, we have revised our stage 2 business case to focus on the public realm improvements around the Globe and ice cream kiosk. This revised bid will be submitted by 29 September in line with the RPA

timeframe. We will look to submit a further bid for the main elements of the modular village project in the next round of RPA funding, which we have been advised will be due early 2020, and make use of the interim time to ensure full engagement takes place with the local population and business fraternity.

Some time ago the Maryport Area Coastal Community Team, of which the council are members, were successful in being awarded £50k to improve the Gazebo situated on the Maryport Promenade. The team have engaged with the community on the nature of improvements and the council, as accountable body, are currently looking to appoint a contractor to carry out the works.

2.3 Corporate Resources (Finance and Property) Portfolio: Cllr Mike Johnson

Helena Thompson Museum

Tenders have been returned for the improvement and refurbishment works at Helena Thompson Museum. The lowest tenders returned were approximately £40,000 over the existing available budget. A growth bid has been submitted for the additional funding through the revised budget process. If the bid is successful works could start in the new year.

Workington Hall

Heritage England have agreed to extend the completion dates within their offer of grant assistance to allow us to start work in late February / early March. The work to be carried out is another phase of the repair and consolidation programme, working towards getting the Hall off the 'at risk' register.

Aspatria public toilets

Agreement has been reached with the Town Council in respect of the toilets in Aspatria. Brandraw toilet block will be fully refurbished by Allerdale Borough Council before being transferred to the Town Council and Allerdale BC will continue to financially support the Town Council on a diminishing scale over the next three years. Once that refurbishment is complete the toilets on Queen St Car Park will be closed and alternative uses for the building will be considered. Allerdale BC will also demolish the already closed St Mungo' toilet block as part of the agreement.

Operational buildings

Property Services are considering the possibility of installing solar panels on our operational buildings to help reduce utility costs. Work is currently being carried out on the feasibility and costings for the proposals.

Member training – Treasury and Capital Management

A training event, covering treasury and capital management was held for members of the Audit Committee and Executive on 22 August. Delivered by

the Council's treasury advisors, Link Asset Services, the training was designed to:

- ensure members of the Audit Committee are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to discharge their responsibilities in relation to scrutiny of the Council's treasury management strategy, policies and associated reports, and
- provide members of the Executive with a broader knowledge and awareness of the framework and environment for local authority borrowing and investments.

Statement of Accounts 2018-2019

In line with the statutory timetable the Council's audited 2018/19 Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was published on the Council's website on 30 July 2019.

To put this performance into perspective, in 2018/19, information released by Public Sector Audit Appointments highlighted that more than 40% of authorities (210 out of 486) failed to publish their audited financial statements by the publication deadline of 31 July.

Following completion of the audit by external auditors Grant Thornton, the Council received:

1. An unqualified audit opinion on the Council's financial statements confirming the statements:
 - give a true and fair view of the financial position of the group and of the Authority as at 31 March 2019 and of the group's expenditure and income and the Authority's expenditure and income for the year to March 2019;
 - have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19; and
 - have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
2. An unqualified value for money conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources was also received. This confirms the Auditors were satisfied that the Authority had put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources during the year ended 31 March 2019.

In their Audit Findings Report presented to the Audit Committee on 30 July, Grant Thornton commented positively on the overall standard of the Authority's financial statements and supporting working papers and on the timeliness and comprehensive nature of the responses received from officers in reply to information requests and queries raised during the audit.

Treasury management annual review 2018-19

The treasury management annual report setting out details of the Council's treasury management activities during the year has been completed and was presented to the Audit Committee at its meeting on 12 September.

2.4 Environmental Quality Portfolio: Cllr George Kemp

Bereavement Services

Bereavement Services are going to be working with the credit union in the autumn, providing advice on low cost funeral alternatives.

Car parking

Car Parking Services continues to perform well with income from permits and pay and display, all meeting the projected income targets.

Work is ongoing with improvement to car parks linked to signage and relining where required, All Saints Car Park faded lines are scheduled to be complete in September.

Environmental enforcement

All new officers have completed their training and have transferred to a new rota system, this will enable the team cover earlier mornings, later evenings and weekends. Current projects include targeted dog fouling enforcement and tackling fly-tipping in the back-lanes of Workington.

The team continue to work closely with the new re-located police hub and the recent success with quick removal of travellers from Central Car Park demonstrates the benefit of joined up working. We also recently issued a £400 fly-tipping fine to a local business.

Waste and recycling

The Council reinstated the collection of commingled recyclates and garden waste services on 9 September, having suspended these services for a period of 2 months. We would like to apologise to residents for any inconvenience caused through the suspension of these services and thank residents for their co-operation and patience throughout this period and for using the Council's Bring Sites to recycle and the County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's) to recycle and dispose of green waste. These have both seen a significant increase in use over the past 2 months.

Parks and Open Spaces

Workington Nature Partnership: Some great work has been carried out over the summer months on our nature sites including participation with the National Citizenship Service programme.

Central Way Underpass, Workington: A full cost estimate has been prepared and consultation with local businesses and fundraising is underway.

Harris Park, Cockermouth: The refurbished tennis courts are now in use.

Cuckoo Arch, Workington Hall Park: The additional length of stone surfaced path to improve access from the new path to the existing path network has been completed.

The Viewpoint, Cockermouth: Improvements at this site at the confluence of the rivers Cocker and Derwent have been completed with the installation of the carved boulders. The project was delivered in a partnership with community organisation, Riversmeet.

Grass verges: We have been working with the County Council to improve the frequency of the cutting of grass verges in Allerdale which, for the remainder of the year and going forward will be maintained to a higher standard in the Borough.

Sports Development

10p swims have taken place over the summer holidays at four Allerdale pools. These have been as popular as ever across the sites, with over 5,000 discounted swims taking place.

Pitch maintenance has been completed on a number of sites - at the three refurbished sites (Derwent Park, Workington and two in Maryport) contractors have finished initial works, with potentially some extra drainage works required on two of them. Tivoli have undertaken some intense renovations on the Allerdale pitch stock and we are getting good feedback from local clubs.

We are about to start a Local Pitch Plan review (football only), which is being funded nationally by the FA. This will look at the portfolio of pitches across Allerdale and give us and other stakeholders a focus for future improvements and resources.

The Leisure Strategy is currently being reviewed, with a draft version due in October.

2.5 Governance and People Resources Portfolio: Cllr John Cook

Audit, Assurance and Risk

The Audit Team are working on the Internal Audit Plan in the areas of procurement and contract management. Risk management support has been provided to management in relation to the options appraisal for the future of the waste service and management of car parking income. We welcomed Alison Milburn into our team in June and excellent progress is being made with her development. Alison will be starting her professional training in the near future.

Electoral Services

The Electoral Services team is continuing to deliver the annual household canvass. Reminder forms have now been sent to non-responding properties and the first wave of Invitation to Register forms have been delivered to new potential electors. To date, around 75% of households have responded. Canvassers will visit any non-responding properties between 19 October and 28 October. Messages will be put on the council's social media sites

encouraging people to complete the canvass forms and register to vote if they haven't already done so. Elected members can help by encouraging residents to complete their canvass form and to register to vote, preferably by using the government's online application platform www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

The team will be running a by-election for Silloth Town Council on 17 October. In the meantime early preparations are being made in the event of snap General Election, including contacting overseas electors to ensure they have either a proxy or postal vote in place, identifying staff resources and getting arrangements agreed with suppliers. Project planning has already begun for the May 2020 Police and Crime Commissioner Election.

Community Governance Reviews

Council is tonight considering a report proposing that two Community Governance Reviews be carried out. If those are agreed then the team will support the working groups in planning and delivering the reviews.

Democratic Services

From 1 September 2019, Democratic Services are no longer issuing paper copies of agendas to 38 members who have signed the consent to electronic information form. Support and training will be ongoing for all members in the form of workshops, one-to-ones and IT Champions. Members are encouraged to contact Democratic Services if they would like any assistance.

To assist the Council in providing the right training and resources to support members in their councillor role a learning and development survey was issued to all members on 29 August 2019 for completion by 20 September. There is still time to complete the survey if you have not done so already. As at 17 September 2019 18 out of 49 members have responded to the survey.

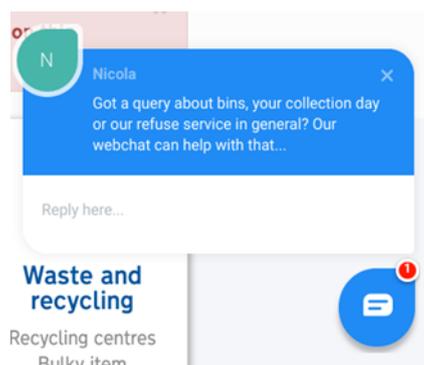
2.6 Transformation Portfolio: Cllr Paul Scott

Customer Service

As always, a busy time for our customer service team though August has seen a welcome reduction in calls when compared to the previous four months from an average 9,600 calls per month down to 7,400 in August.

We are forecasting an increase in customers contacting the Council as the recycling and garden waste services begin again and we head into the autumn, particularly around reports of leaves falling. I would like to remind members and our customers that the myAllerdale online reporting service which is available 24/7 through our website or the mobile phone app and is the easiest and most convenient way to report issues to the council. So far this financial year we have seen a 12% increase in the number of "report it" online reports submitted by customers using myAllerdale.

We have also recently introduced a webchat service for customers with bin related enquiries which has proved very popular with customers with over 600 chats completed so far.



Customer Accounts

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) figures for benefit claim processing times in 2018 /19 showed that Allerdale has once again improved performance in processing both new, and change of circumstance benefit claims to be the highest performing Council in Cumbria and well above the national average processing speeds.

This excellent performance is thanks to the efforts of the Customer Accounts team who consistently deliver great performance for our customers.

| Claim type | Allerdale | National average |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Change of circumstances | 4 days | 7 days |
| New Claims | 13 days | 21 days |

ICT

Cyber security remains a high priority for the Authority and a member of the team recently attended an LRF Cyber Threat Training day which was organised to look at good practice around maintaining safe and secure IT networks and systems to protect data. Several case studies were highlighted including attacks on the NHS to share the learning from such incidents.

Programmes and Projects

Several projects to generate revenue, encourage innovation and expand trading opportunities have been identified within our Transformation Programme with a view to delivering improved customer service and efficiency, reduce costs and increase income across services. The Transformation Programme is under constant review to ensure that it aligns with the Council's core strategic documents such as the Council Plan, the Business Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Procurement

As part of the Council's commitment to supporting local businesses, we work hard to explore ways to increase the proportion of total spend with local suppliers in Allerdale and Cumbria. The procurement team have engaged with local businesses to advise them how they can participate in tender exercises run by the Council and have recently amended the forms and processes to make them easier for people to use. We have led on getting together a county-wide group of procurement officers with representatives from all of the

Cumbrian authorities. We are also working with the Bloom framework to provide training workshops for SMEs, third sector and volunteer organisations to include specification writing and bid writing as well as arranging a supplier engagement day in the autumn so that they can be aware of our upcoming projects that will require a procurement and they can be prepared to participate.

2.7 Housing, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio: Cllr Stephen Stoddart

Big Allerdale Switch

Registration for the Autumn Big Allerdale Switch opened on 13 August 2019. Residents have until 7 October 2019 to register for the Big Allerdale switch with the auction taking place on 8 October.

iChoosr have awarded Allerdale a certificate of achievement for helping to save our residents an impressive £272,837 on their energy bills.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Pamela Armstrong, Housing OT has been shortlisted for Housing OT of the year at the National Healthy Housing Awards run by Foundations. The award ceremony takes place at Westminster on 25 September and we wish Pamela all the very best.

Housing Strategy refresh

The Housing Strategy is in the process of being refreshed and is due to be presented to Executive in November 2019. Scrutiny Members recently received a presentation from the Housing Policy Manager on the proposed updates. The Scrutiny Committee members were very positive about the changes and a healthy discussion took place which has assisted members in better understanding some of the challenges faced in delivering the strategy. Scrutiny members are keen to receive further updates and are supportive of the work required to deliver the Housing Strategy.

Strategic Review of the Homeless Service

A strategic review of the Homeless Service commenced in August 2019. Following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act local authorities are required to deliver their services in a different way and provide homeless services to a wider range of customers presenting as homeless. In light of the new legislation a review of the services will provide an assessment of what we currently do, who is currently presenting as homeless and why. The evidence from the review will support the development of a new homeless strategy and rough sleeper strategy which is planned to be presented to Executive in spring 2020.

As part of the review, the housing policy team will engage with a range of key partners at a meeting due to be arranged for 31 October 2019.

Self-Build Custom Housebuilding Policy and Grant Funding

Following the introduction of the Self-Build Custom Housebuilding Policy in October 2018, the Housing Policy Manager has carried out a review of the policy and made recommendations to the recent Executive Committee in September to make minor changes to the local connection criteria and remove the charging policy which has proved to be unsuccessful.

Executive members were also asked to continue to support the small grants funding project which offers financial support to applicants on Part One of the register, to access funding to pay for their planning and or building control fees. Executive members have also agreed to support retrospective grant applications to those who could demonstrate they would have been eligible to be on Part One of the register, have paid for their planning and or building control fees and planning permission has been approved. This funding will only be available where the applicant uses or has used Allerdale BC services.

The housing policy team are now receiving new applications to go onto the register, and applications for small grants funding.

Environmental Protection

The bathing water season is coming to an end on 30 September. We now only have Allonby (West Winds) as a designated bathing water, and this is currently classed as "good". We have continued throughout the season to participate in the Environment Agency's pollution risk forecasting system at Allonby. This year we fully utilised the electronic signage which displays pollution warnings via text message. This has resulted in a resource saving as officers were not required to visit the beach each time a warning was issued by the Environment Agency. We are hoping to retain our classification of "good" and will be notified in November once the Environment Agency collate all the bathing water results for this year's bathing season.

We took part in Active Coast Week in July and arranged a beach clean which included volunteers from the local primary school at Allonby which was a great success. We intend to participate in the Taste Cumbria, Cockermouth event in September to promote LOVEmyBEACH.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Members note the content of the report.