

At a meeting of the Council held in SEN Centre, Lakes College, Workington on Wednesday 21 September 2022 at 7.00 pm

Members

Councillor Allan Daniels (Chair)	Councillor William Pegram (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tony Annison	Councillor Carole Armstrong
Councillor Herbert Briggs	Councillor Markus Campbell-Savours
Councillor Barbara Cannon	Councillor Nicky Cockburn
Councillor John Crouch	Councillor Janet Farebrother
Councillor Marion Fitzgerald	Councillor Peter Gaston
Councillor Patrick Gorrill	Councillor Malcolm Grainger
Councillor Iain Greaney	Councillor Jimmy Grisdale
Councillor Hilary Harrington	Councillor Michael Heaslip
Councillor Alan Hedworth	Councillor Daniel Horsley
Councillor Mike Johnson	Councillor Peter Kendall
Councillor Alan Kennon	Councillor Jim Lister
Councillor Louise Maguire	Councillor Anthony Markley
Councillor Owen Martin	Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes
Councillor Antony McGuckin	Councillor Joe Sandwith
Councillor Paul Scott	Councillor Andrew Semple
Councillor Alan Smith	Councillor Stephen Stoddart
Councillor Kevin Thurlow	Councillor Alan Tyson
Councillor Will Wilkinson	Councillor Lynda Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Cook, Councillor Vaughan Hodgson, Councillor George Kemp, Councillor Adrian Kirkbride, Councillor Sally Lansbury, Councillor Elaine Lynch, Councillor Ron Munby MBE, Councillor Alan Pitcher, Councillor Blain Sansom and Councillor Colin Sharpe

Staff Present

B Carlin, A Gilbert, N Hardy, K Kerrigan, K Magnay, C Nicholson, G Roach, A Seekings and L Stamper

164. Minute silence for her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The Mayor led a minute silence in honour of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

165. Minutes

Councillor W Wilkinson highlighted an error in the minutes in that he had been present at the previous meeting on 27 July 2022 but he had been recorded as absent.

The minutes of the previous meeting were signed as a correct record subject to the above amendment.

166. Declaration of Interests

12. Reference from Chief Officers Employment Panel (09/09/22) - Chief Officer Appointment.
Andrew Seekings; Other Interest; Due to the potential impact of the decision on his position within the organisation.

167. Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items on the agenda for which the press and public should be excluded.

168. Questions and Petitions

None received.

169. Notices of Motion

None received.

170. Councillor Speeches

None received.

171. Announcements from the Mayor, Leader or Head of Paid Service

The Mayor made reference to the engagements attended since the last Council meeting and thanked all those who had assisted in the preparations for the Allerdale Borough Reading of the Proclamation on Sunday 11 September following the death of the Queen.

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Queen Elizabeth II saying, as a public servant, she was an example to us all.

172. Portfolio Holder Updates

Councillor M Johnson moved the Portfolio Holder update report.

Questions were raised on procurement and social value, the High Street Task Force and jobs in Cockermouth, Community Investment Funding linked with the Allerdale Community Partnership, sports and leisure, a feasibility study for the development of a BMX track in Workington, Maryport regeneration projects and safety aspects of the Solway Coast cycle track.

With regards to Revenues and Benefits, Councillor M Campbell-Savours asked the following;

'Noting from a summary draft outturn report provided to the Executive in April, for the cost centre 'Council Tax Hardship Fund', it appears there is an approved budget of £246K of which the gross outturn at 31 March only appears to have been £10K, have we failed to distribute that money? Is the online form planned for introduction in September to apply for discounts and exemptions in respect

of Council tax related to this? And if we have only spent £10K can someone tell me where is that budget now?’

In Councillor C Sharpe’s absence it was agreed a written response would be provided to all members following the meeting.

Councillor L Williams left the meeting

173. Executive Minutes

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 22 June 2022 were noted.

174. Reference from Chief Officers Employment Panel (09/09/22) - Chief Officer Appointment

This report was considered by the Chief Officers Employment Panel on 9 September 2022. Members considered the report and the recommendations.

Councillor M Fitzgerald moved the recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor M Johnson.

A vote was taken, 36 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention. The motion was carried.

Resolved –

1. That Andrew Seekings remains as Chief Executive for Allerdale Borough Council until 31 December 2022, however, he will be de-designated Head of Paid Service from 1st October 2022;
2. That Paul Wood (existing Chief Officer for Transformation) is appointed as Interim Head of Paid Service for Allerdale Borough Council from 1st October 2022 until 31 December 2022 with an additional uplift in substantive salary and to be appointed as Interim Head of Paid Service and Interim Chief Executive Officer from 1st January 2023, paid at the full salary as set out in the Council’s Pay Policy.

175. Community Governance Reviews

The Chief Officer Place and Governance submitted a report which sought members consideration of a Community Governance Review application from both Embleton and District Parish Council and from Allhallows Parish Council.

Councillor M Fitzgerald moved the recommendations as per the report. This was seconded by Councillor M Johnson.

A vote was taken, 36 in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions. The motion was carried.

Resolved

1. That Council agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review of Embleton and District Parish Council to consider the Electoral arrangements, specifically to reduce Councillor numbers;
2. That Council agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review of Allhallows Parish Council to consider the Electoral arrangements, specifically to reduce Councillor numbers;
3. That the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Reviews as set out in appendices 1 and 2 of the report, be agreed;
4. That the Community Governance Review be co-ordinated and facilitated by officers without a member working group and that final recommendations be made to Council who will then make recommendations to the Shadow Cumberland Council.

176. Update from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Co-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee moved the update report for information.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

Question from Cllr M Campbell-Savours to Cllr C Sharpe

Noting from a summary draft outturn report provided to the Executive in April, for the cost centre 'Council Tax Hardship Fund', it appears there is an approved budget of £246K of which the gross outturn at 31 March only appears to have been £10K, have we failed to distribute that money? Is the online form planned for introduction in September to apply for discounts and exemptions in respect of Council tax related to this? And if we have only spent £10K can someone tell me where is that budget now?

Response

Discretionary Hardship Fund

The government initially awarded a hardship fund of £910k to Allerdale Borough Council on 3 April 2020 as a response to the impact of Covid19. The government strongly advised councils that this should be used to pay up to £150 to council tax reduction recipients.

Allerdale (along with the other 5 Cumbrian district councils) decided to award a higher level of assistance up to £300 per CTR recipient. This was primarily due to the fact that Cumbrian authorities continue to apply a fully funded scheme which covers up to 100% of council tax liability. Allerdale Borough Council delivered £646k in discretionary council tax reduction to support local households.

In addition, £27k assistance was provided to local welfare organisations including Citizens Advice, North Lakes Foodbank and Gypsy and Traveller welfare facilities.

The council currently holds £237k in earmarked reserves.

Discretionary Housing Payments

In July 2001, the government introduced the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations. These regulations permitted local authorities to award additional amounts to housing benefit claimants who required further financial assistance to meet their housing costs. The government recognises that local authorities are best placed to deliver discretionary help to their residents.

Between 2013 and 2020, the level of government allocation was increased to minimise some of the effects of the Welfare Reform Act upon the most vulnerable households, such as: -

- the benefit cap
- size restriction social rent
- reform of local housing allowance

Over the last two years, the level of government contribution has seen reductions.

Financial year	Government allocation	Level of funding delivered to vulnerable households
2019-2020	£228,217	£219,485
2020-2021	£251,264	£234,657
2021-2022	£198,193	£196,682
2022-2023	£140,471	Committed £109,668 (up to 07/09/22)

Allerdale Borough Council has allocated £109668 over approximately the first 5 months of the year, if this continues over the remainder of the financial year, this would result in expenditure in the region of £260k for the full year.

The council has started to see additional demand for discretionary housing payments. This is primarily due to the cost of living increase which is causing low income households difficulty in paying their rent. This is estimated to be in the region of a 10% increase in demand. The annual expected expenditure is forecast to be £286k in 2022/23.

We will reallocate £146k from the hardship fund to supplement the Discretionary Housing Payments allocation. This will allow the Council to continue providing targeted support to the most vulnerable in the community.

Remaining funding

This will leave a remaining balance of £90k. Officers are currently looking at options for how this money can best be spent to continue to support Allerdale residents experiencing hardship over the winter months.

Cllr C Sharpe

Executive Member Finance and Legal