

Allerdale Borough Council

Council – 30 January 2019

Portfolio Holder Updates

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 Alan Smith – Leader of the Council
Lead Officer	Senior Management Team

Report Implications

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 Alan Smith

The Local Plan

The Local Plan was submitted on 18 January to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government for independent examination. The examination will be undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate which will consider whether the local plan is legally sound. This will involve reviewing the evidence base as well as comments received from statutory consultees and the local community. The Planning Inspector will also hold hearings and invite interested parties to take part on issues they believe require further examination. The whole process should take approximately six months to complete.

Nuclear Issues

I have written to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy setting out the details of the motion on the Moorside project that Council passed at the meeting on 5 December. On 17 December, I met with a senior representative of the NDA to discuss a number of nuclear related issues, including supply chain concerns and the follow up to the Public Accounts Committee Report. Finally, Members will be aware that Government has launched another search for a site for a Geological Disposal Facility. Officers are reading through the substantial amount of material that has been released and will be providing a summary for Members in due course.

Local Government Reorganisation

I have written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on behalf of the Cumbrian District Leaders and the Elected Mayor of Copeland to outline our belief that any change to the current governance model should be decided inclusively, together, based on proper evidence and taking into account the special circumstances that makes each district in Cumbria such a unique place to live and work.

To base the whole case for a Unitary Cumbria on financial assumptions takes no account of the significant complexities of delivering services in a very challenging geography and significantly rural area such as ours. Cost savings are only one part of the debate.

The District Leaders want to forge a positive future for Cumbria and work with the County Council and other partners in the public and private sector to

modernise and transform the way we work and provide a sustainable, affordable model for public services for generations to come.

As District Councils we do not believe that the Government should, or needs to, intervene in a top down, imposed re-organisation. However, we must continue to collaborate to keep the dialogue going within Cumbria to find the right solution.

Devolved government, combined authorities, shared services, unitaries, Mayors and economic partnerships such as the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the Lancaster and South Cumbria economic initiative are all part of the mix and all District Leaders are committed to continue working on **ALL** of these options to find the right solution.

2.2 Deputy Leader: Economic Growth Portfolio: Cllr Mark Fryer

Successful Planning Appeal

Following an appeal hearing held in November we have received notification of an appeal against the decision of the Council to refuse outline planning permission for the demolition of the former Cumbria Seafoods Factory at Maryport and the development of 65 dwellings. This was the second appeal relating to the proposed redevelopment of this site. Planning permission had been refused because it would result in the loss of an existing employment site and due to concerns that the development of housing would potentially prejudice the operation of industrial occupiers in the remainder of the industrial estate. The Inspector agreed with the Council's reasons for refusing planning permission and dismissed the appeal. Whilst the Council is keen to support housing in appropriate locations it is also important to safeguard key employment sites. It is encouraging to note that part of the site has now been brought back into use for employment use.

Wigton facelift scheme

Following the allocation of an additional £20,000 funding for the Wigton facelift scheme we are now able to support further improvement schemes within the town centre to add to the 93 properties that have already benefited from the scheme.

Christmas events and promotions

Working with partners we were able to support a range of events and promotions in both Workington and Cockermouth in the lead up to Christmas and support local traders and business in this important trading period.

Maryport Regeneration

December saw the launch of the Future High Streets Fund by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This is currently being reviewed in relation to Maryport and we hope to submit an expression of interest by the March deadline. In addition, agreement was reached with the Rural Payments Agency to submit a full bid focusing on improvements to the

Promenade and development of a Pod Village on the harbour side by June following the recent approval of our expression of interest.

2.3 Tourism and Culture Portfolio: Cllr William Jefferson

Destination Allerdale (Virtual Reality) project

Seven VR 'pods' are being installed at visitor information points across Allerdale and at Carlisle Lake District Airport where members of the public can access the VR media. This project will be complete by 31 January 2019.

Allerdale Day

The Allerdale Day 2019 will be held in Albert Square, Manchester on 22 June 2019 with a launch reception on the evening of 21 June 2019. The outdoor exhibition will promote Allerdale as a great place to visit, work and invest and will build on the success on the 2018 event.

Tourism Breakfast Briefings

The latest briefing was held on 22 November 2018 at the Skiddaw Hotel, Keswick. Over 60 businesses attended and heard speakers from the private and not-for-profit sector. The next meeting will be held at the Carnegie Theatre, Workington, on 27 February 2019.

UCLan intern

We have entered into a mutually beneficial partnership with UCLAN where placement students work as part of the Place Development Team and a third-year MBA student started with us on 7 January 2019. They will be involved in a number of projects and initiatives focused on destination and town centre development.

Cumbria Day in Parliament

We had a Visit Allerdale stall as part of Cumbria Day on 23 January at the Houses of Parliament. The newly created promotional videos and virtual reality experiences were exhibited to promote the area as a great place to visit, invest and work.

Keswick Live Advent Calendar

We once again supported the Keswick Live Advent Calendar that saw a different festive event take place in Keswick town centre on every day of advent. The initiative helped to boost town centre footfall and promote Keswick as a shopping destination.

Other promotional activity

Additional Allerdale content has been secured on the Cumbria Tourism's Go Lakes web site in the Western lakes section and in their 2019 Holiday Guide.

Keswick cycling leaflet and web content - we are working with the private sector to develop additional content for visitors on our Visit Allerdale website and a supporting printed leaflet.

Hadrian's Wall Cycle path business opportunities

Sustrans, the national cycling charity is upgrading signage and interpretation material along the route. There will drop-in meetings, printed material, web and social media content to flag up the business opportunities this offers for local businesses along the route.

Cumbria Visitor Survey 2018

The survey included 300 face to face interviews with visitors to Allerdale inside and outside the Lake District National Park. Key findings compared to the last survey in 2015 show:

- 83% of our visitors are over 45 years of age, up from 71% in 2015. Our Virtual Reality and Route 66 projects and initiatives aim to attract more younger visitors.
- 18% of our visitors have a disability, up from 14% in 2015.
- 2% of our visitors are from an ethnic minority, up from 1% in 2015.
- 90% of our visitors are from the UK, up from 86% in 2015.
- The North West was the source of 35% of our visitors, followed by Yorkshire and Humber (14%), North East (14%), Scotland (9%) and the South east (9%).
- Top reasons for visiting Allerdale were physical scenery, been before, peace, relaxation and beauty.

2.4 Housing, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio: Cllr Carni McCarron-Holmes

Affordable housing provision

A large grant payment is due to be provided to the Above Derwent Community Land Trust in relation to capital works required to develop a new scheme at Portinscale. Legal verification on state aid implications are currently being sought as part of this process.

Work continues to be undertaken with the Keswick Youth Community and Housing initiative to develop on land within their ownership at the centre of Keswick. Support is also ongoing with the Keswick Community Housing Trust with a large grant payment in order to develop a scheme on the site of the old Methodist Church later in the year.

In line with the Allerdale strategic focus on coastal communities, work has commenced on establishing a suitable location for a community led housing scheme. A positive meeting has been held with Maryport Town Council discussing ways in which a community led housing initiative could be introduced in Maryport.

Big Switch

The Autumn Big Switch took place in October. E.On were the auction winners. 160 registrants registered to switch. The average saving was 115.87 and 59.5% of registrants could save. The Winter Auction launched 4 December with the auction taking place on 12 February 2019. Targeted promotion of the Big Switch is being planned particularly in fuel poor areas.

Disabled facilities grants

In December the Government announced an additional £55 million to be spent in year on Disabled Facilities Grants. Allerdale was awarded an additional £128,213 which is expected in January. This additional budget will enable the team to order works that have been placed on the approved waiting list. To date we have approved 137 Disabled Facilities Grants this financial year.

Rogue Landlord Enforcement Grant

On 8 November Housing Minister, Heather Wheeler MP announced that Local Authorities will be able to “bid for funding to step up enforcement action against irresponsible landlords”. Following some of the issues raised at a St Michaels engagement event and the concerns raised by Ward members about the private rented sector in the St Michaels Ward we thought this would be a great opportunity to apply for funding to deliver a pilot project in the area. Our bid for the fund was successful and the team are now looking to implement the proposals. Below is a brief summary of the proposal:

By gathering intelligence of the Private Rented Sector to improve knowledge, we intend to introduce a voluntary registration scheme along with an Allerdale Rent with Confidence Scheme. Training events for Landlords and Tenants will take place which will raise awareness and improve the standard in the PRS. Property rented by those landlords choosing not to engage in the pilot scheme will be targeted for housing inspections and where appropriate, enforcement action will be taken. This is a pilot project with the intention of rolling out in other priority areas within the borough. Learning will be shared with other Cumbrian/rural authorities.

Housing options

The Housing Options team have seen a significant increase in customers asking for help and advice this year. During 2016/17 they dealt with 221 cases, in 2017/18 that number rose slightly to 255 however so far this year they have seen 362 with the final quarter of the year still to go and we forecast a total of nearly 500 by the end of the year.

In line with the increased numbers seeking advice we have been managing an increase in demand for our temporary accommodation. Allerdale has seven properties used to house customers who find themselves homeless and fall within the required criteria to be homed.

Between April and October the occupancy rate of those temporary accommodation properties has been around 80%, however between October and the end of December the occupancy rate has been an average of 95%.

To provide more support to customers where we have two bedroom accommodations we have made changes to enable us to double the occupancy in the units and on occasion we have had to use local bed and breakfasts when completely full.

Food and Occupational Health

The new Animal Welfare (Licencing of Activities involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, which were introduced on 1 October 2018 brought in a single licence for animal welfare activities reflecting up to date welfare requirements. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to implement the new legislation efficiently and effectively as each activity i.e. animal breeding, have extensive, specific standards and conditions and a rating system has been introduced. In addition, coming under the local authority remit for the first time are mobile animal exhibits and performing animals. This means the authority will need to consider the breadth of activities and establish whether businesses come under the requirements of the legislation. It is expected there will be an increase in the number of licences that will need to be issued. Additional training for officers will be considered as part of the new requirements.

The authority supported the Food Standards Agency's Food Safety Christmas Campaign based around preparing and cooking the Christmas meal in a hygienic and safe way. The campaign also gave advice on storage of the turkey and the use of left over foods. The Times and Star promoted the messages and the authority provided advice via the authorities' website.

Environmental Protection

The team had a successful fundraising event with employees and members in support of the National Toilet Twinning campaign which helps some of the world's poorest people gain access to safe sanitation, clean water and hygiene education. We successfully funded three toilets, one in RobO't Bolo, Shunghan District, Afghanistan; one in Tistung VDC, Makawanpur, Nepal; and one in Makura Village, Rumph District, Malawi. Well done to all involved.

We also supported the Taste Cumbria event at the Love My Beach stand which proved very popular with adults and children.

2.5 Corporate Resources (Finance and Property) Portfolio: Cllr Barbara Cannon

Workington Hall

Tenders will be returned by the beginning of February 2019 for a further phase of repair and consolidation works which should allow us to get the building off the 'at risk' register. Heritage England will advise on the outcome of the updated grant application once tender figures have been returned. If the application is successful works should start on site in late March / early April.

Multi Storey Car Park, Workington

Further works planned for the MSCP include the replacement of light fittings on the top floor with more efficient fittings. This work will be carried out over the next two months.

2019/20 Budget

Over the course of the last quarter the Finance team have been leading on the preparation of the Council's 2019/20 budget; including preparation of initial budget proposals for consideration by SMT and CLT.

The provisional local government finance settlement was announced on 13 December 2018. Allerdale BC has signed up for the Multi Year Settlement and so the figures announced are in line with those as set out in our medium term budget position.

Unfortunately our application for Cumbria to pilot 75% business rates retention in 2019/20 was not one of the 15 successful applications.

Members' training/briefings

Since the last Portfolio Holders update, Finance staff have also carried out a number of briefing sessions for Scrutiny members covering the Quarter 2 finance report and revised budget for 2018/19, and the budget process for 2019/20.

2.6 Governance and People Resources Portfolio: Cllr Joan Ellis

Democratic Services

On 24 January the Member Development Working Group will meet with the Chief Executive to re-sign the Council's commitment to the North West Charter for Elected Member Development award, also signed by the Leader of the Council. This will kick start a review of the member learning and development activities within the Council which is hoped to be complete by the end of 2019.

Work continues on developing the induction programme for May 2019.

Members have now been contacted by Democratic Services to review their Personal Development Plans, this is an opportunity to discuss any support or development requirements you may have so we encourage you to take part if there is anything you wish to discuss.

Members are also reminded to review their Register of Interest forms and ensure they are up to date. These forms are published under the Councillor details on the intranet/internet alternatively contact Democratic Services.

Electoral Services

The Electoral Services team is now preparing for the May 2019 elections; venues have been provisionally booked and staff availability letters are being sent out. The Notice of Election will be published on Monday 18 March and

this will signify the start of the statutory election process. Purdah guidance will be issued shortly.

Briefings on the election process, the role of a councillor and local arrangements for councillor induction and development are planned for 11 February (Wigton Market Hall), 12 February (Allerdale House Council Chamber) and 13 February (Keswick Quaker Meeting Rooms) and 25 February (Cockermouth Town Hall) – all start at 6pm and are open to all councillors, potential candidates, election agents and parish councils. Anyone who would like to attend should contact Electoral Services to register their interest.

Postal vote refresh letters have this month been sent out to all postal voters who have had their postal vote in place for 5 years; electors are requested to provide an up to date signature and to confirm their date of birth. Any who do not respond will have their postal vote removed and they will need to re-apply if they subsequently wish it to be reinstated.

The amended polling districts, subject of a separate report to this meeting, and the new Allerdale ward boundaries are being set up in the electoral management system and will enable a new version of the register of electors, based on the new wards, to be published on 1 March 2019. This is the register that will be in force for the May elections and copies will be available on request to candidates.

Assurance, Risk & Audit

The Audit Team continue to deliver the planned statutory audit work for 2018/19. The Audit, Risk and Assurance Manager has been working on the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards Self-Assessment process alongside the Audit Committee effectiveness review. Both of which will be delivered to the Audit Committee for consideration at their meeting in February 2019.

Legal and Licensing

The Licensing Team are currently procuring a more permanent service for the practical driving test, following the success of the pilot scheme which ends in January. The tender has been advertised and will shortly be considered and scored. The knowledge test has also been successfully implemented, and tests are underway following pilots with Members, staff and drivers. The aim of both the driving test and the knowledge test is to improve the quality of the service provided in the Borough. The Gambling Policy has also been updated and approved by full Council.

The Legal Services Team continues to support the Authority in the delivery of the Council's priorities and objectives, as well as contributing to the successful implementation of corporate projects by working closely with officers from across all services, elected members and the public.

People Resources

The People Resources Department has recently reviewed the Pay Policy Statement. Under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to appoint officers on such reasonable terms and

conditions as the authority thinks fit. The Pay Policy Statement sets out the Council's approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.

The purpose of the statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying;

- the methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;
- the detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff i.e. 'chief officers', as defined by the relevant legislation;
- the Chief Executive (as the Head of Paid Service) is responsible for ensuring the provisions set out in this statement are applied consistently throughout the Council and recommending any amendments to the Council.

Once approved by the Council, this policy statement will come into immediate effect and will be subject to review on a minimum of an annual basis, the policy for the next financial year being approved by 31 March each year.

2.7 Transformation Portfolio: Cllr Konrad Hansen

Programmes and Projects

I wish to congratulate the Head of Programmes and Projects (Brendan Carlin), Programme Office Manager (Elaine Ridings) and Assistant Programme Office Manager (Dawn Clark), who each obtained qualification in Managing Successful Programmes MSP Foundation and Practitioner in December 2018.

The team are applying their training to the Council's working methods and have held briefing sessions with all managers to ensure that the principles and objectives of the programme approach are adopted and embedded across the Council. The team have progressed the defining and development of the Council's key programmes through a series of workshops with project leads, supporting officers and stakeholders.

Procurement

As well as successfully completing a series of recent procurements as part of business as usual, the team continue to work on ways to increase the proportion of total spend with local suppliers in Allerdale. From Q1 to Q3 of this year, we have spent 41.19% with local suppliers (an increase of 5.12% as compared with the same period last year) and, if the trend continues, it is anticipated that we should meet/exceed our target of 42% for the year.

The team are actively exploring ways to improve communication with local suppliers including attending the Allerdale Community Asset Expo in January to raise awareness of opportunities through procurement aimed at new and SME businesses, reviewing our 'Invitation to Tender' documents and engaging with local businesses to explain how we advertise procurement opportunities and explain the process.

ICT

The 'New Ways of Working' training programme for all Allerdale staff has begun and is an ongoing training programme for our staff to make sure that they are ready and able to embrace the digital transformation that is going on all around us. The programme has been developed, and is being delivered, in-house.

Customer Operations (Revenues & Benefits, Council Tax, Customer Service Centre)

Customer satisfaction when contacting our customer service team remains high and has improved on the previous month with 98% of customers surveyed now rating the experience as satisfactory or highly satisfactory.

December was overall a quieter month, as had been forecast, with significantly less contact from our customers. To put this into context, in November there were 11,430 enquiries compared to just 7,568 in December – 3,360 of these enquiries were telephone enquiries the remainder face to face and on-line.

A total of 448 service requests were logged on the **myAllerdale on-line reporting service** logged directly by customers using the on-line self-service.

101 service requests were logged by customers during the Christmas closedown. Customers received automated responses advising of timescales to action the reports and enquiries as appropriate. Fly tipping, missed bin collections, litter and dog fouling reports submitted when our offices were closed were dealt with by our contractors who maintained a service during this period.

The processing of new benefit claims this year continues to remain well ahead of target as is the council tax collection rate with 85.40% of this year's tax having been collected by the end of December.

Transformation programme

The Transformation Programme, one of four key programmes of work across the Council, is now underway following the initial transformation and commercialisation workshop which was held recently. The programme will focus on a number of themes including the Customer Journey, Organisational Development, Digital Allerdale, and Commercialisation.

2.8 Environmental Quality Portfolio: Cllr Michael Heaslip

Environment Heritage Initiatives

Artwork for the Confluence, Cockermouth, has now got Environment Agency approval and the work will start very soon.

The Siddick Pond education centre is complete and there will be an official opening with Mrs Bacon unveiling a plaque in memory of the late Councillor Bill Bacon who championed Siddick Pond over many years. There is also a new viewing area on the cycle way.

There will be a public consultation soon on possible designs for brightening up the dank tunnel which leads from Central Way Workington towards the new Leisure Centre, and improving it as a route for pedestrians and cyclists.

Our proposal to Heritage Lottery Fund for refurbishment of Workington Hall Park didn't get through the first assessment; there was a total of £123m applied for across England and only £19m available. However, there is a new fund being launched at the end of January and we will be re-applying. In the meantime we are continuing with plans to house a pottery project and a health project within the walled garden and to provide wheelchair and pushchair/pram access between the upper and lower levels of the parklands.

Council Sport and Play Facilities

GLL have funded the refurbishment of the gym and lavatories at Keswick Spa to improve the quantity and quality of usage.

Sport Development

We have tendered the refurbishment of paths and the tennis courts at Harris Park Cockermouth and are in discussions with the Town Council about transferring the park once the improvements are complete.

An "Exercise on Referral" (referral by GPs) programme funded by Sport England is running at Workington Sports Centre and we hope to extend the funding to better support the existing scheme in Wigton.

Parking

The "early bird" parking scheme is now operating in the Multi Storey Car Park in Workington where people can park for £2.50 all-day if they arrive before 9am and leave after 4pm. A monthly permit is even better value for money at £25.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Members note the content of the report.