

Allerdale Borough Council

Council – 17 July 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 Council 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 portfolio updates are as follows:

2.1 Leader of the Council: Cllr Marion Fitzgerald

The first two months

During this time, there have been many introductory meetings with local entities and partners including Iggesund, Sellafield Ltd., the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and the Mayor of Copeland. It is hoped that these relationships can be effectively built upon in future for the benefit of all parties.

Cumbria Association of Local Councils

I am grateful to Cllr Owen Martin for representing ABC at the meeting on 11 July and would like to take this opportunity to encourage members to attend in future. CALC meetings, otherwise known as 3 Tier, provide an excellent means of forging links and sharing information across all three levels of local government – parish/town, borough and county.

Allerdale Investment Partnership

The partnership has changed a number of times since it was first formed in 2014. From October 2018, the Council's partner has been IAG. To avoid association with former partners who have not been well perceived publicly, it has been agreed that there will need to be significant changes to improve transparency, retender for services with a view to include more local businesses, and review the members' agreement to allow the partnership to go forward.

Nuclear Issues

Cllr Iain Greaney will attend the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) Summit in Anglesey along with the Council's Nuclear Policy Advisor, Richard Griffin. Their combined report will be available to all councillors.

The Government's National Policy Statement (NPS) for Geological Disposal Infrastructure was put to Parliament on 4 July. This sets out planning guidance for the developer of any GDF and related infrastructure and outlines the assessment process for development consent applications in England. It complements the already published white paper on working with communities which sets out the Government's process for finding a volunteer community to host a GDF.

Stadium project

A decision was taken by Allerdale's Executive on 28 June 2019 to look further into the business case for a new community stadium in Workington, with a view to reducing the size and scale of the proposal. Although disappointing the decision means that the Council would not be able to meet the already tight deadlines of the Rugby League World Cup and has therefore withdrawn from the process.

Information to councillors

To ensure that members have access to information, three sessions have been organised to discuss significant issues being dealt with by the Council. These cover the review of the decision to build a stadium at Borough Park and the current problems with waste and recycling services. It is our intention to continue with sessions like these as the need arises. Councillors are also reminded that portfolio holders are available to be asked for information as required.

Cumbria Leaders' Board (CLB)

In addition to longstanding members, the meeting in June was attended by new leaders. It was agreed that it is necessary in future to demonstrate a joined up approach, with a common position and a collective voice on key themes and work streams. Without this, there is a risk that the Board will be a catalyst for few outcomes and relatively small-scale impact.

CLB will hopefully provide a channel through which the Borderlands Fund might be pursued since Allerdale is included in the Borderlands geography but not in the Borderlands partnership. I welcome the Borderlands announcement and look forward to engaging with the Borderlands partnership and understanding what role Allerdale can play moving forward.

Other events

Armed Forces Day on 24 June was very well attended and it was wonderful to welcome schoolchildren to the event. I hope to build on this and that we will see more involvement with schools going forward.

It was also a privilege to attend the Wigton Carnival parade and the Lakesman Triathlon Event, supported by this Council, in Keswick on 16 June.

2.2 Deputy Leader: Economic Growth Portfolio: Cllr Mark Jenkinson

Allonby to Silloth cycle path

Planning consent has now been granted to develop a new multi-user path between Allonby and Silloth. We are managing the project on behalf of Silloth on Solway Coastal Community Team who secured £1 million under the Coastal Communities Fund to enable delivery. A procurement process is currently underway to appoint a main contractor with construction works expected to be completed in 2020.

Facelift scheme – Aspatria and Silloth

Twenty expressions of interest have been received to date. The scheme allows property owners in designated town centre areas to receive a grant of 90% of the cost of decorating the outside of their premises up to a maximum grant of £900.

Small events grant scheme

The scheme supports new artistic and cultural events with grants up to £2,000 that encourage community participation and also appeal to visitors so benefiting the local economy. Ten events have been supported so far this year.

International visitors

We are implementing plans to grow the number of Chinese and Indian visitors to our area by working in partnership with two private – public initiatives, the Northern Lakes District China Forum and the Cumbria India Forum.

Cumbria Tourism Awards 2019

Allerdale businesses were prominent at the recent award ceremony. Congratulations to the winning Allerdale businesses.

Maryport Regeneration

Following on from a previous bid for funding from the government's High Street Fund the Maryport team are currently preparing a further bid for funding from the Historic England High Streets Historic Action Zones (HSHAZ) programme, which aims to support sustainable economic and cultural growth on and around high streets and restore and enhance local historic character, making the high street an attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and play. HSHAZ will do this through physical works to buildings, including repair, reinstatement of lost features and conversion to new uses including residential. An Expression of Interest will be submitted by 12 July.

Community focused clean-ups have continued to take place in Maryport with the support of local community groups, the Town Council, Tivoli and our own staff.

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

Property Services

Maryport: The timber groyne on South shore has been refurbished and is already beginning to accumulate beach material to protect the toe of the sea wall.

The artwork on the Tongue pier has been restored. This included replacement of tiles telling the history of Maryport and repairs to the "Blinking eye" statue. We worked closely with the original artist Paul Scott from Blencogo.

There will be works carried out at the Maritime Museum over summer including external painting and sandstone re-dressing.

Workington: Allerdale House has just had a new fully addressable wireless fire alarm installed.

Grange: Refurbishment works have taken place prior to the proposed transfer of the toilets to LDNP – we have put a new roof on the building, installed a new ceiling, replaced all the doors and windows and are currently in the process of replacing existing sanitary fittings with new stainless steel sanitary ware.

Harrington: The path will be extended leading into the former rose garden from the south to alleviate problems disabled users are finding with the steps.

Workington Hall: We have been offered a grant to cover some of the improvements required to work towards getting the building off the 'at risk' register. However, the original contractor is unable to carry out the works in the required timescale. We are currently speaking to Heritage England regarding a re-tendering exercise.

Helena Thompson Museum: Works to provide new toilets, a new entrance and DDA compliance works have been drawn up, planning permission is currently being sought. The works will go out to tender later this month with a view to being on site in mid-September.

Statement of Accounts

In line with the statutory timetable the Council's unaudited 2018/19 Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement (AGS) were published on the Council's website on 31 May 2019.

The Statement of Accounts and AGS are currently being audited by the external auditors, Grant Thornton. There is a national issue that has arisen due to a ruling made regarding age discrimination arising from public sector pension schemes transitional arrangements, consequently some further work on the pensions liability is required before the statements can be presented for approval by the Audit Committee.

2.4 Environmental Quality Portfolio: Cllr George Kemp

Waste and Recycling

The Council introduced a new waste collection service on 1 April 2019 with collections carried out on our behalf by FCC Environment. This kept weekly domestic waste collections along with a fortnightly recycling service and introduced new bin collection rounds, new collection vehicles and replaced the single use purple sack with a green 120ltr bin and a new larger bin for paper and card.

However, since the changes were introduced FCC have not been able to collect from some properties on the scheduled collection day. Therefore, the Council has introduced temporary changes to help crews complete the rounds whilst more permanent solutions are devised.

This has meant:

- All garden waste collections have been suspended for up to two months from 8 July.

- All glass, cans and plastic recycling collections have been suspended for up to two months from 8 July.

Domestic waste and paper and card collections remain unaffected by the changes.

During this period, residents are advised to use the recycling centres and the household waste recycling sites to dispose of their waste during this period. Details, and locations, can be found on the council's website at: <https://www.allerdale.gov.uk/en/waste-recycling/recycling-centres/> .

Parks and Open Spaces

Jubilee Park, Harrington: Working in partnership with the Friends of Harrington Nature Reserve, we secured a grant of £25,500 from the government's Pocket Parks Plus fund to enhance this small park, located immediately adjacent Harrington Nature Reserve. A first phase of work has taken place during May and June to create a new tarmac path, and to re-surface existing paths along with new park boundary railings, new seating and tree planting. A second phase of work will follow later in the year, focusing on re-planting the shrub beds, creating a wildflower meadow and installing a natural play feature.

Get Cumbria Buzzing: Over the next three years this exciting West Cumbria-focused project will create and manage new and existing habitat for pollinating insects. The lead organisation is Cumbria Wildlife Trust and we are a key partner. A grant of £912,800 has been secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with additional funding coming from other key partners, including ourselves, Copeland Borough Council and the Highways Agency. The project was officially launched at the end of May and the first Steering Group meeting took place in June. We are now working with the Wildlife Trust to develop our Delivery Plan for Year 1 of the project. We will be responsible for delivering pollinator-friendly improvements on 12 sites and the project will generate lots of great publicity and media coverage, so keep a look out and check out the relevant page of the Wildlife Trust website via <http://bit.ly/cumbria-buzz>. We are aware that the County Council has reviewed the frequency of highway verge maintenance which is not directly associated with this project.

Central Way Underpass, Workington: Following endorsement of the project by the Allerdale Highways Working Group in June, a Quantity Surveyor has been appointed to prepare a robust cost estimate for the agreed scheme. Work is also progressing on the Brow Top enhancements scheme.

Siddick Pond Water Improvement Grant: We have secured a grant of £141,797 from this fund (jointly provided by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and Defra) to undertake a suite of enhancements on this special nature reserve over the next two and a half years. We are developing our Delivery Plan for Year 1, which will include partial clearance of Northside allotments, creation of a shingle island in the smaller (brackish) pond), reedbed management, control of invasive plant species and ecological survey.

Harris Park, Cockermouth: Refurbishment of the tennis courts is nearing completion. The finishing touches of the coloured coating to the playing surface and the new nets will be completed shortly. Also, a new tarmac footpath along the river Cocker section has been constructed to replace the badly eroded path that previously followed the river bank. The new path follows a gently curving route set back from the river and is a great improvement.

Cuckoo Arch, Workington Hall Park: We have completed a scheme to re-establish a pedestrian route through this historic feature of the park. The new tarmacked path with a gentle, even gradient is already being well used and is particularly appreciated by those with limited mobility. Repairs to the sandstone walls either side of the path have also been undertaken. A second phase of work will follow, which will involve the construction of a stone surfaced path to improve access from the new path to the existing path network.

Fairy Path, Maryport: We are working in partnership with Cumbria County Council to re-open this important Public Right of Way. This year the focus is on undertaking the ground investigations and scheme design, with implementation to follow in 2020/21. CCC has tendered the work and consultants (White, Young, Green) have been appointed.

Harrington Marina: The Marina has seen a number improvements over recent months with the marina and surrounding areas cleaned and improved with the help of local school children and other community groups.

Education and Enforcement

We have now successfully filled all four positions and the team have made a great start to the year with fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued for dog fouling, fly-tipping and failure on duty of care.

Campaigns concentrating on cigarette litter and fly-tipping in back lanes have been started and will run over the summer period. The team have also been working with three schools in Allerdale with each running a mini project around recycling and litter.

The team have supported and continue to support a number of community clean-ups, particularly around the Cumbria in Bloom. These have been in the Aspatria, Maryport, Seaton and Plumbland areas.

Bereavement Services

Bereavement Services have achieved the gold standard for the Charter for the Bereaved for the sixth year running. This is excellent news and outlines the high quality of the service delivered in this area.

The new cremated remains vaults are now available in Maryport Cemetery as a new service offered enabling a vault to be purchased for the respectful placement of cremated remains within the Cemetery.

The road and path repairs are now complete at Salterbeck Cemetery and as a result, we have received positive feedback on these improvements from users of the Cemetery.

Sports Development

Work on the two football pitches in Maryport is nearing completion. Both sites will have an adult sized, fenced pitch to be used by the two main junior football clubs in the town as well as other clubs and schools.

10p swims will be launched for the summer at Workington, Cockermouth, Keswick and Wigton pools for young people aged 16 and under.

Allerdale are a partner in the Cumbrian Girls Can Campaign, the first summit is to be held on the 19 July hosted by BBC Radio Cumbria's Helen Millican. A series of inspirational videos have been produced by the partners, of local ladies taking part in all forms of physical activity which will be launched on social media on the 16 July.

The Sport England funded Healthwise (Exercise on Referral) project has just been launched in Wigton for the Solway area, and the Workington scheme continues to be successful with now over 100 formally inactive people engaged in the scheme.

A new inflatable soft play activity will be introduced to The Wave in Maryport for their summer programme, and going forward, providing activity for younger children. The inflatable will be in the theatre space, and can be taken down when required for other arts and theatre activities.

Improvements have been agreed with our partners GLL, to the Keswick and Cockermouth changing rooms, giving a much needed revamp. Keswick works are almost complete and Cockermouth will start during the next quieter period.

Arts, Sports and Heritage

Keswick Museum and Art Gallery water ingress works are complete and their collection is due to return shortly.

Lakesman 2019 was a huge success. The full event and the half event were sold out early in the year, with just under 800 athletes on the start line on the day. Numbers of spectators increased by around 20% on last year and the total value of the event in Keswick to the local economy is estimated at £2.36m, nearly £500,000 up on 2018.

Car Parking

Usage of Workington Multi-Story Car Park has increased in comparison with the same period last year, as a result of the "early-bird" promotional offer of £2.50 for weekday parking for those who arrive between 7am and 9am and leave between 4pm and 7pm.

2.5 Governance and People Resources Portfolio: Cllr John Cook

Democratic Services - Member training

As the initial induction sessions are coming to an end focus will move towards continuing development. To provide the right training and support to allow you to carry out your role as councillor an electronic Training Needs survey will be published on the members' webpage in August which all members will be

expected to complete. The information gathered will help identify learning and development areas and will inform the Member Development Programme for 2019/20.

Upcoming sessions to look out for;

- IT/Tablet training - Wednesday 24 July 2019 (afternoon and evening sessions)
- Chairing Skills - Tuesday 3 September 2019 – this session is mandatory for all appointed Chairs and Vice Chairs. All members are welcome to attend.

Over the coming months there will also be 'An introduction to local government finance and the council budget' and 'An overview of Data Protection legislation/GDPR implications for councillors'.

Democratic Services - Digital communication

Democratic Services are still providing paper copy agendas for meetings where required. If, however, you signed the consent for digital correspondence this will cease from 1 September 2019.

To assist the move towards digital working, Democratic Services, with support from our digital champions continue to deliver training. The training includes the basics of using the tablet, using the modern.gov App for agendas and minutes, emails, the internet and the members' webpage.

The drop-in sessions are continuing throughout July and August and 121 coaching will be available from August. Details can be found on the members' webpage.

Electoral Services

The Electoral Services team is continuing with the post-election work from the two major elections held during May and from the June Keswick Town Council countermanded election. Candidates from the 2 May elections who have still to submit their expense returns have now received a final reminder.

The annual household canvass begins at the end of July with Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) being sent to all domestic properties within the borough on Saturday 27 July. This major piece of work is preparation for the publication of the new register of electors, by checking for example for changes such as electors moving in and out of properties and young people reaching the age of eligibility for registration. New potential electors identified on the HEF are then sent a registration form to complete.

Households are being encouraged to respond to the HEF using the online or SMS response services where possible. The canvass will continue through to the late autumn when canvass staff will visit all non-responding properties and the new register of electors will be published on 1 December. Councillors can help the process by encouraging electors in their ward to respond to the HEF and, where necessary, to complete a registration application.

People Resources

A new appraisal process which includes our revised Values and Behaviours framework has just been successfully launched. This objective is linked to the Organisational Development Strategy and will help align Council priorities by driving exceptional performance.

We have just procured a new e-learning system and are currently in the planning and implementation phase with a planned go live date in the autumn. Having an effective e-learning system will allow our staff to be trained on a range of subjects eliminating the need for costly training courses.

Audit, risk and assurance

The Audit Team have now finalised all reviews from 2018/19. The Audit Plan for 2019/20 has been approved by the Audit Committee and we have started planning work for the Health & Safety and Procurement Audit Reviews. We have a new team member who started on 24 June. Alison will be a huge asset to the team and comes from a financial services and education background.

2.6 Transformation Portfolio: Cllr Paul Scott

To be voted on to Allerdale Borough Council as a St John's Ward councillor was a great honour, I promise to do my very best for St John's and Allerdale. To be offered a position on the Executive is a big responsibility and one I won't take lightly. I have a great team alongside me and hope we will grow together to deliver the change demanded by the people of Allerdale. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the previous Executive Member for this portfolio, Konrad Hansen, and for the hard work he has put in over the past number of years.

Customer Service

It has been very busy for Customer Services during Quarter 1, it has seen the team deal with 46,000 customer enquiries; 63% were telephone enquiries, 31% face to face customers at our offices across the borough and 6% through the myAllerdale on-line service.

Customer Accounts

During Quarter 1 the customer accounts team continued to exceed their processing time targets for customers submitting new Housing Benefit and Council tax reduction scheme claims, as well as for Council Tax Reduction Scheme change of circumstances claims.

Benefits

Performance figures for processing benefit claims show:

Housing Benefit new claims – target of 15 days; performance of 8.5 days.

Council Tax Reduction new claims – target of 15 days; performance of 13.6 days.

Changes of circumstances – target of 4 days; performance of 3.1 days.

Council Tax Collection rates

Quarter 1 performance figures to May 2019 (June not yet available) show:
Council Tax collection – target 20.57%; performance of 20.48%
National Non Domestic Rates collection – target 22.16%; performance of 22.18%.

Recovery

During June we applied to the court for liability orders for unpaid council tax and business rates, this is a process which happens several times each year. Liability orders from the court are a necessary part of the legal process to recover unpaid tax giving the council the power to attach earnings or benefits, or use enforcement agents (previously known as bailiffs), among other things. The hearings involved a total of £1,049,300 for council tax (995 cases) and £191,259.87 for business rates (41 cases). Comparatively, at the same time last year for council tax there were 1,040 cases (£1,042,153) and 46 cases for business rates.

We would always urge anyone that finds themselves in financial difficulty to contact Allerdale Borough Council directly, we will make every effort to accommodate people in making their payments. If they are struggling we can offer guidance about steps which can be taken.

ICT

Our ICT team continue to support the day to day operations of the Council as well as working on a number of projects. They are also currently working with our suppliers on platform upgrades for our call centre system and a major system upgrade for the myAllerdale platform.

Programmes and Projects

Our Transformation Programme supports the Council's strategic objective of becoming more innovative and commercial with a view to ultimately becoming self-sufficient by 2030. The blueprint sits alongside a programme plan and a dossier of projects that collectively aim to increase productivity by using technology to deliver improved customer service and efficiency, deliver cost savings and increase income across services. Projects to change software systems are underway to improve the customer experience and better enable Council services to work together more closely. The team is developing business cases on several project ideas to generate revenue and expand trading opportunities.

Procurement

As part of the Council's commitment to supporting local businesses, we continue to work on ways to increase the proportion of total spend with local suppliers in Allerdale and Cumbria. The team has attended business networking forums to raise awareness of opportunities for local SME businesses, reviewed our standard tender documents and services agreements to make them more easily understood, and is regularly engaging with local businesses to explain how and where we advertise procurement opportunities.

2.7 Housing, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio: Cllr Stephen Stoddart

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

Government allocation for DFGs this year is £1,214,265. It is anticipated that this will be spent and committed in the financial year. As a result the Council will not be delivering Discretionary Grants launched in 2017.

Community Led Housing

The Cumbria and Lancaster Community Led Housing Hub has been in operation since 1 April 2019. A web page is being developed to guide groups wishing to deliver community led housing, however, in the interim communities can access information via ACTION with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) website.

A Community Led Housing Grant has been awarded to Caldbeck Parish Council to help obtain pre planning advice as a prelude to facilitating the establishment of a Community Group to develop a project for self-build affordable housing in Caldbeck.

2 new grant applications for Community Led Housing have also been received and are being considered.

Big Allerdale Switch

109 people registered for the May 2019 Big Allerdale switch. 57% of registrants could save with an average saving of £113.65. The launch of the Autumn Big Allerdale Switch starts on 13 August 2019.

Empty Homes

Over the coming months the team will be writing to empty home (over 6 months) owners in Maryport to inform them of the Empty Home Grant that is available. This forms part of the Maryport Regeneration programme.

Environmental Protection – Air quality

Last Month we submitted our 2019 (Air Quality) Annual Status Report to DEFRA. The report communicates the results of our Air Quality monitoring during 2018 explaining our methodology and also our actions as a council to improve air quality in 2018. It also outlines challenges and plans for the future.

In support of our air quality work we engaged with Clean Air Day in June which is a national air quality event. This involved educative media work via our website and social media accounts. An educative stall was also set up in the Workington Hub with leaflets, pledge cards and visible activities including an exercise bike loaned from the leisure centre.

Environmental Protection – Water quality

We are still working with other agencies to improve bathing water quality and respond to pollution incidents. We continue to work to maintain and improve the bathing water quality status of Allonby – in the short to medium term

maintaining the 'good' status and in the long term aiming to gain 'excellent' status.

Currently, we are in the process of coordinating and supporting the organisation of the Active Coast Week this July 2019. This is to encourage Allerdale residents to think about going to the beach and the coast for their health and wellbeing and to highlight the diversity of the coast and activities available along the coast.

In March 2019, we helped complete the Morecambe Bay and Cumbria Beach Management/ Water Quality Action Plan as an overview of the actions we take as a Council with other sections within Allerdale Borough Council.

At the moment, we are working towards finalising the LoveMyBeach business pack for Allerdale Borough Council for all employees with signup sheets distributed within Allerdale House. Future promotional events for LoveMyBeach are to be organised for the rest of the 2019 bathing water season across Allerdale with the continuing promotion of the 2020 septic tank regulations.

Health

The first Public Health Alliance meeting following the district council elections was held in June. The purpose of the Public Health Alliance is to develop and deliver a strategic framework to address key public health and wellbeing issues including tackling wider determinants of health, and it will oversee the coordination of delivery of the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy. Each district is represented by their relevant portfolio holder and other Alliance members come from a range of public and third sector agencies.

The first meeting covered the refreshed Cumbria Suicide Strategy which was endorsed by the Alliance prior to its submission to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service are to include atrial fibrillation checks as part of their safe and well visits. The meeting also heard about the Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board and the Barrow Multi Agency Drug-related Deaths Group.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Members note the content of the report.