

Allerdale  
borough council

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# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Final Summary Report 2022-23

*“Allerdale – a great place to live, work and visit”*

## Introduction

In setting its work programme for 2022-23, the last year of existence of Allerdale Borough Council, the Committee felt it important to make it clear what legacy they wish to leave to its successors, although ultimately, it's for them to decide. This report therefore is more directed to Cumberland Council than to Allerdale Council.

## Report From:

**Councillor Michael Heaslip**

**Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes**

**Co-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met thirteen times during 2022/23. The Committee considered a wide variety of subjects over the course of those meetings, below summarises the key activities to be highlighted

### **Regeneration Programmes -**

The Committee have received regular updates on both the Workington and Maryport Regeneration Programmes, along the way covering the individual projects within each programme, ongoing works and associated costs and timescales.

With respect to the Workington programme Members expressed concern at the inflation of costs, and, in respect of the Sports Village, the increasingly tight timetable for delivering this project within the programme period.

An overview was provided on the Maryport projects including the Wave Centre, Carlton, Christchurch and the proposed Boardwalk. Members were advised that due to issues with multiple ownership, the Empire Yard project was no longer deliverable due to costs increasing however savings from the Empire Yard project would be used on the other projects.

Members have shared their concerns about future revenue generation for the Carlton and the reduction of specification for the proposed pool at the Wave Centre.

### **Cost of living crisis -**

Members noted that funding provided both locally and from central government was being used fully and appropriately in supporting the most vulnerable of our citizens.

### **Gypsy and Traveller site -**

Members noted the long history of trying to find a site for Gypsies and Travellers, and recognised that a single site might not meet their varied needs. Executive was urged to progress the sites searches with urgency.

### **Housing Grants and Assistance Policy -**

On consideration of the policy review OSC made a recommendation to the Executive which had then been approved. The recommendation was as follows;

‘That the Executive recommends to the new Cumberland Authority that a housing stock condition survey be carried out on all older buildings in the area, including a whole household energy consumption audit’

### **Options appraisal for leisure provision in Keswick -**

Members were content that the options appraisal for reprovision in Keswick had focussed on plausible locations and facility options and provided a sound basis for future decision-making in partnership with the people of the Keswick area.

### **Allerdale Outside Body representatives -**

All current member representatives had been asked to provide any final feedback/information they felt important to hand over to the Cumberland Council in the transition.

A summary of the feedback received can be accessed [here](#)

### **Community Safety Partnership (CSP) -**

Members noted that the future arrangements seemed very uncertain; the PCC had withdrawn funding and, apparently, interest in the Partnership and seemed to be focussing attention on the Police Multi-Agency Hubs: it was not at all clear what the relationship was between these Hubs and CSP, if any.

Officers had advised that going forward, the CSP would come under the remit of the Director of Public Health and the CSP funding may need to come from Cumberland Council. However, members noted, that Cumberland Council had already set its budget for 2023-24, and no new funding was likely to be available beyond that which is a legacy of its predecessor Councils.

### **Final report from the Climate Change Group -**

The Committee was to receive a summary presentation from the Chair of the Allerdale Climate Change Group at their last meeting on 17/03/23.

The final full report including recommendations can be accessed [here](#)

## **Task and Finish Group activity**

The Task & Finish Group studies for 2022-23 had been set aimed at producing reports for Cumberland Council as well as for Allerdale. The Committee felt it important to make it clear what legacy they wish to leave to its successors, although ultimately, its for them to decide. The agreed last three TFGs were to be:

- 1 – Access to Primary Health Services – especially GPs and Dentistry
- 2 – Customer Services
- 3 – Democratic Participation in Voting.

The scope of work and recommendations from each group are summarised below:

## 1. Access to Primary Health Services – GPs and Dentistry TFG

The group consisted of Councillor John Cook, Councillor Malcolm Grainger, Councillor Iain Greaney, Councillor Michael Heaslip, Councillor P Kendall, Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes (Chair), Councillor Paul Scott and Councillor Alan Smith. Councillor Colin Sharpe – as an Executive member also attended meetings.

The review was intended to focus on the following:

- To consider the delivery of GP and Dentistry services with particular regard to services in Workington
- To scrutinise the plans of the NHS for these services
- To work with County Health Scrutiny, Health Watch and Patient Participation Groups to understand the needs of the community in these services.

### Recommendations

#### General recommendation

R1 That Cumberland Council commissions a Healthwatch provider urgently and in line with the requirements of the ***Health and Social Care Act 2012*** to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Careful consideration should be given to ensure that these requirements are met with an active and involved provider for Cumberland.

#### Dentistry specific recommendations

R2 That Allerdale Borough Council writes to the three Members of Parliament for Allerdale and ask them to take up the complex issues of dentistry with the relevant ministers which include:

- No NHS appointments available in Cumbria for new patients. This includes children.
- The dental contract, which is recognised as not being fit for purpose, and is hitting provision in Cumbria particularly hard.
- Payment levels to make NHS dental work sustainable and profitable and therefore worthwhile.

#### To Cumberland Council

R3 To develop a plan to support dental training with University of Central Lancashire and ensure that all funding streams available are used to support training across the council area, building on their Dental Education Centre in Carlisle.

R4 To look at how the Council can work with dental commissioners to welcome new entrants into the area, from the provision of premises to support with training opportunities.

- R5 To work with commissioners to seek to consolidate practices into larger dental groupings, covering larger geographic areas therefore offering dentists a wider variety of work and better economics.
- R6 To explore opportunities to develop mutual or social enterprises in partnership with commissioners to employ dentists.

### **Primary Care specific recommendations**

#### **To Cumberland Council**

- R7 Track and support the specific issue of an under provision of GPs and Nurses affecting specific areas including Workington within the new Council.
- R8 Recognise the knock-on risk of practices in trouble impacting neighbouring areas that in themselves may have recruitment and retention issues.
- R9 Use all Council programmes and resources to support training and education programmes in partnership with UCLan Medical School / National Centre for Remote and Rural Medicine (NCRRM); University of Cumbria / Imperial College; and other providers.
- R10 To work with partners to support new initiatives to relieve pressure on specific areas and to widen the pool of specialist medical staff providing services.
- R11 To use the opportunity of the new diagnostics centre to be built at Workington to create a focus for a range of health care services.
- R12 To look at the suitability of healthcare premises in each area and consider if there is a role for the Council to intervene to improve provision (as with dentistry) to use its landlord holdings and development powers to create attractive and economic places for GPs (and dentists) to operate.

#### **To NHS England**

- R13 To pay particular attention at areas that fall below the expected provision for GP and nurses (Number per 100,000 residents) and consider interventions including directly employing GPs, nurses and specialist healthcare staff in these areas.
- R14 To share information with residents on what the NHS is doing to improve GP and nurse provision in these areas.

The Full Report, approved on 13/01/23, can be accessed [here](#)

## 2. Customer Services TFG

The group consisted of Councillor Barbara Cannon, Councillor Allan Daniels, Councillor Malcolm Grainer (Chair), Councillor Peter Kendall and Councillor Andrew Semple.

The review was intended to focus on the following:

- To consider the impact on residents of appointment only and digital by default models of customer service
- To consider how public service delivery hubs as 'one stop shops' for public services can be delivered, as detailed in the economic growth strategy.
- To hear directly from customer service staff on the needs of residents

The group concluded by producing a report with the below recommendations:

### Recommendations

#### To Allerdale Borough Council

- R1 The Task Group welcomes the commitment in the Customer Strategy to offer ways of contacting the council that works for the resident, especially the commitment to 'Digital by choice' in contrast to 'Digital by default'
- R2 Work to ensure the high standards that residents expect in customer service are maintained right up to handover to Cumberland Council and into the transition phase of the new authority.
- R3 Residents are kept informed of the impact of the new council and what will change from a resident's point of view trying to contact the council.

#### To Cumberland Council

- R4 To adopt a resident focused customer service that offers face to face as well as on-line and telephone contact.
- R5 To ensure every part of Cumberland has good access to face-to-face meeting facilities.
- R6 To continue to offer a customer service ring back service, that avoids the need to sit waiting for an adviser to become available, thus ensuring every call receives the full care and attention it needs.
- R7 To continue with the best practice of mystery shopper exercises and support continuous improvement of Customer Services as currently deployed by Allerdale Borough Council and set out in the Allerdale Borough Council Customer Strategy.

The Full Report, approved on 09/12/22, can be accessed [here](#)

### 3. Democratic Participation in Voting TFG

The group consisted of Councillor Carole Armstrong, Councillor Malcolm Grainger, Councillor Michael Heaslip (Chair), Councillor Peter Kendall, Carni McCarron-Holmes and Councillor Alan Smith.

This group was created as Councillors were keen to support improvements to the elections processes and use their recent experience in the process with the aim of maximising democratic participation from all residents.

Councillors had expressed the desire to ensure effective working at community / parish level. The abolition of District Councils and the creation of Cumberland Council may present a widening of the gap between each community and the new Council.

Councillors were also concerned with the introduction of voter ID and the consequential need to a) ensure voters are able to get suitable ID; b) consider the implications for the internal layout of polling stations.

The intention was that the review would identify recommendations that could either be implemented by Allerdale Borough Council in the short term or carried forward as principles for the new unitary authority to consider.

#### Recommendations

##### To Cumberland Council

- R1** Use the power of compulsion to use maintained schools and to make available any property in its portfolio
- R2** To support a promotion and marketing campaign in association with parish councils that would support residents getting to know what a parish council is, how to get involved, how to stand for election.
- R3** To ensure that every parish has the right number of councillors and the right number of polling stations for their effective operation and promotion of democracy through.
- R4** In 12 months to conduct a review on how effective the new Cumberland Council place boards are and how parishes interact with the new council.
- R5** Undertake a review of the principles of parish governance starting from "purpose" and consider whether mergers, groupings or less formal clustering may be needed to enable the parish tier to fulfil its purpose more effectively

## **To Parish Councils**

- R6** To consider their own buildings meet the requirements for accessibility and useability for elections. To actively co-operate with returning officers on establishing polling stations.
- R7** Recognise that democracy is expensive and ensure that an appropriate sum is set aside in parish budgets to cover the cost of elections /by-elections per polling district as part of in-year budgets / elections reserve?

The Full Report, approved on 17/03/23, can be accessed [here](#)