

Executive Report to Full Council – 22nd September 2020

Strategic Leadership - Mayor Mike Starkie

Communications

The Communications team has supported the Elected Mayor in the launch of our new campaign, Shop Local: Keep it in Copeland, to promote the borough's retail and business sector. Campaign stickers have been produced for the borough's shop windows and their website/social media pages, and an online retail directory created.

We have also formed a partnership with Newsquest – publishers of The Whitehaven News, News & Star and The Mail – to secure in print and online coverage for our businesses. Coverage so far has included bars, cafes and restaurants (linked with the Eat Out to Help Out scheme) in addition to hair, health and beauty salons and it will continue weekly for the next five months.

Communications around Covid-19 continue daily, with the team forming part of the countywide media group to generate and share consistent messages around testing, restrictions, schools re-start and economic recovery. Working with our Tourism Officer, the team is supporting the #PerfectPlaceToBe campaign to highlight the borough's attractions and beauty spots.

Attracting significant positive media coverage over recent weeks has been the reopening of the Beacon Museum, and the record-breaking recycling volumes collected by our crews. The team also carried out a survey on the Whitehaven Market which attracted over 600 responses and will feed into the decision-making on its future operations.

Other media coverage has included:

- The launch of a coastal challenge event as part of the Connecting Cumbria's Hidden Coast programme
- Bigrigg couple Linda and David Park winning our Best Kept Garden competition
- Unemployed residents securing work in the care sector after completing a Copeland Work and Skills Partnership course

Revenues

Council Tax Collection Rate

	31.8.19	31.8.20	+/-
Council Tax	47.43%	46.42%	-1.01%

The Council Tax collection rate is currently down on the same time last year by 1.01%. The impact of COVID19 naturally causing most of this reduction. In addition, in line with all other district councils in Cumbria, the council has paused all statutory recovery cycles for quarters one and two. Recovery cycles are due to commence again in September 20.

4,000 Soft recovery letters were issued in May 20 and a further 1,500 letters were issued in July 20.

The COVID Council Tax Hardship Fund reduction of £300 for working age local council tax support recipients was processed on 20th August 2020. 1,228 working age claimants received a discount on their council tax, and bills have been issued accordingly.

Business Rates Collection Rate

	31.8.19	31.8.20	+/-
Business Rates	83.59%	85.39%	+1.80%

The Business Rates collection rate is up on the same time last year. 100% business rates relief to the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors is assisting here, along with a number of business rates payers choosing to pay their yearly charge in March/April 20.

With effect from 8th September 2020, the first business rates grant scheme has paid out £15.4 million to 1,356 Copeland businesses. This is over 90% of the available fund provided by government. Most of the businesses remaining are likely to be restricted from applying due to State aid.

A second discretionary grant scheme was launched between 1st and 15th June 2020. The council received 167 applications for this scheme and has paid out 100% of the available fund, which was £853,250. The intention of the discretionary scheme was for councils to offer support to businesses that were unable to access any other COVID19 cash grant schemes.

Benefits - Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support/Council Tax Reduction

Processing times for New Claims and Changes in Circumstances for Housing Benefits and Council Tax Support for the Quarter have fluctuated during this quarter due to increased workload, team resources and leave.

The legislative changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have now been applied to the systems and claimants notified, together with the Hardship Fund awards of up to £300.

Face to face appointments will be commencing from 14th September, however, we do not anticipate having many, as customers appear to have adapted well to the changes of interaction during Covid.

Housing Benefit Overpayments

All active recovery is still on hold for the moment. The current outstanding balance is £822954.99 as at 4th September 2020.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Applications for Discretionary Housing Payments continue to be made. These applications continue to be received via the following routes:

- Applications made following claimant completion of the form on the Council's website.
- Telephone applications.
- Postal applications.
- Applications completed by Citizens Advice or Home Group Financial Inclusion Partners.

Currently 140 successful DHP awards have been made with a further 53 unsuccessful awards.

Following the impact of welfare reforms a total of 85% of successful awards have been granted based on the removal of spare room subsidy with the remain 15% split over impact due to benefit cap, LHA restriction or combination of reforms/additional impact.

Current DHP spend for 2020/2021 stands as follows:

Date	2020/2021 DHP total allocation	Spend	% of Allocation Spend	Remaining Fund
08.09.2020	£207,191	£103,081.56	49.75%	£104,109.44

Based on all applications received to date, a total of 11 applications made were as a direct result to claimants' financial circumstances due to COVID-19.

Economic Development

Cumbria LEP

We continue to attend Cumbria LEP strategy and sector groups to help guide and support our local programmes, particularly the Visitor Economy Sector Group as we deal collectively with the impacts of Covid and recovery strategy.

The LEP's Business Economic Response and Recovery Group (BERRG) that was set up specifically to deal with the Covid-19 situation across the County, is now moving towards being a longer-term group and reshaped as the Business and Economy Advisory Group. The LEP are currently drafting a plan for Cumbria's Economic Recovery – Restart, Reboot, Rethink and intend to have a document in place by the end of October.

We are also contributing to the challenges faced by People, Employment & Skills Strategy Group. This includes the need for a Local Skills Responsiveness Programme (LSRP) to reflect the recent announcement by the Chancellor on skills within the Summer Economic Statement. The LSRP will address the complexity of the skills offer, and reflect how programmes, initiatives and incentives relate to each other.

Town Centre Regeneration:

Future High Streets Funding (FHSF)

We submitted our Full Business Case for FHSF to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 5th June 2020. The programme for Whitehaven is intended to transform the core of the town centre with a focus on King Street and its links with the harbour. The projects are grouped under two key themes "*Connecting Whitehaven*" which will reshape Whitehaven and improve the experience of visiting the town; and "*Diversifying Whitehaven*", which renews the high street with new uses to drive growth and ensure future sustainability. The Business Case reflects the opportunities to address the impacts of Covid on Whitehaven and particularly King Street.

The total scheme will cost just over £24.5M, with the application to government at £15.8M from FHSF against a further application to Sellafeld Ltd's Social Impact Fund to match MHCLG's contribution. Cumbria LEP has supported the team with the development of our Business Case and has confirmed match funding of £1,056,649 of Local Growth Fund. The Whitehaven FHSF scheme will be delivered by 2024 should our Business Case be successful.

Town Deal Funding

Following initial progress setting up the Town Deal Boards earlier in the year, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the Towns Fund guidance in June. The guidance highlighted the purpose of the Towns Fund to drive the sustainable

economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth through urban regeneration, skills and enterprise infrastructure, and connectivity.

Towns must develop a well-evidenced Town Investment Plan (TIP), which sets out a clear understanding of the area, focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges. The amount of investment from the Towns Fund will be based on the strength of the Plan and how it aligns with the Towns Fund objectives. The Government will consider proposals to invest up to £25 million in each town. Both Cleator Moor and Millom Town Deal Boards intend to submit by 31 January 2021.

Technical support is in place to support the Boards and Council with the TIP development, including economic analysis; urban design, project costings and graphic design production of the TIPs, as well as stakeholder engagement.

On 1st July 2020, MHCLG wrote to the Council offering both Cleator Moor and Millom grants of £500,000 to fund capital projects that can be delivered this financial year and support both towns in responding to the immediate challenges, including improvements to parks and green spaces and sustainable transport links; repurposing empty commercial properties or site remediation. Both towns have identified projects that will address some of the immediate challenges that are deliverable by March 2021.

Nuclear and Corporate Services – Deputy Mayor Councillor David Moore

Nuclear

Sellafield

General Update:

There have been a number of developments at Sellafield since the last report:

- Sellafield Ltd recently published a revised Social Impact Strategy – referred to as Six (Social Impact multiplied).
- There are now around 4,000 workers working on the Sellafield site in adherence to social distancing rules. Office-based employees continue to blend their hours between offices and home working.
- Magnox Reprocessing has restarted with an intention to complete the reprocessing mission as planned, with a revised completion date during 2021.
- The Box Encapsulation Plant Product Store Direct Import Facility (BEPPS-DIF) successfully received an inactive transport package – highlighting the important work the facility will do when operational and receiving waste from legacy areas of the site.

- In August, Sellafield announced the award of a £30m contract to TSP Engineering in Workington for the manufacture of waste containers to support decommissioning and retrievals operations on the site. The contract is expected to sustain or create 200 jobs.
- A chemical disposal occurred on site on August 14th when staff on routine inspections identified small amounts of organic peroxide at the Magnox Reprocessing Plant. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team attended the site and safely disposed of the substance.
- Work on the Buzz Station in Whitehaven continues, with progress shared in a recent video and podcast.

Sellafield Planning Update:

Since the last Full Council there has been the following developments at Sellafield:

- **NSGP (New Steam Generation Plant):** This major application, comprising an amended design for the proposed facility at Fellside, was eventually approved in July 2020. The outstanding issue relating to noise and the potential for it to adversely affect neighbours has now been satisfactorily addressed by the imposition of appropriately worded conditions.
- **Transport & Movement Plan:** This is still awaited. Sellafield Ltd have decided to take the opportunity presented by the `Sellafield pause` to review their approach. Sellafield Executive agreed revised principles in July 2020 and new travel targets are now being developed for approval in mid-September 2020. A revised Travel Plan is being written. Further updates including amended timescales are now awaited.
- **SL's PPA (Planning Performance Agreement):** A 12 month extension has now been agreed and signed by SL and ourselves with a view to developing a new PPA by March 2021. Cumbria County Council have entered into a separate 12-month extension with SL.
- **Potential New Applications:** Confidential pre-application discussions are currently progressing with a view to SL submitting planning applications shortly for the following major developments on site; a new CNC Operational Unit; Replacement Analytical Laboratories; the demolition of Calder Hall Turbine Hall A.

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) Update

Strategy 4

In August, the NDA published a draft of Strategy 4 for a 12-week public consultation. The NDA is mandated by the Energy Act of 2004 to review and update their strategy every 5 years to outline how they intend to implement relevant UK policy to deliver the NDA mission.

Officers are reviewing the Strategy and will hold a workshop with Members of the Strategic Nuclear & Energy Board (SNEB) later this month to compile the response, which will take into consideration the Council's agreed Nuclear Position Statements.

Members can find the draft Strategy 4 consultation document here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nuclear-decommissioning-authority-nda-draft-strategy-for-consultation>

NDA Sustainability Report

Via a NuLeAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum) workshop, officers received a presentation of a draft NDA Sustainability Report. The report will form part of the NDA's reporting commitment in the future, and sets out how delivery of the NDA mission creates wider value for the environment and communities around the UK's nuclear sites.

Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus

On 13th August, the Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus was endorsed by the Board of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership. This follows endorsement by the Cumbria LEP Clean Energy Sector Panel and the Mayor's Future Opportunities Group.

The Prospectus sets out a nuclear sector-specific, place-based vision for Cumbria's role in decarbonising the UK's energy systems. With buy-in and support from countywide stakeholders, the document is being used to engage and attract prospective clean energy developers including new and advanced nuclear, hydrogen and offshore wind.

Council officers are working with the Cumbria LEP Clean Energy Sector Panel to develop these opportunities in advance of expected announcements in the autumn.

New Nuclear Update

Moorside Clean Energy Hub

On 30th June, EDF Energy announced the formation of the Moorside Clean Energy Hub consortium, which brings together some of the UK's leading industry and supply chain organisations, and trade unions. The consortium proposes the development of a clean energy hub at Moorside.

UK SMR

Following receipt of £18m of Industrial Strategy Challenge Funding, matched by industry partners, the UK SMR consortium continues to develop an advanced light water reactor design for the UK. Council officers continue to engage with the consortium through the Cumbria LEP Clean Energy Sector Panel.

Advanced Modular Reactors

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has announced the successful technology vendors who will progress to Phase 2 of the Advanced Modular Reactor competition, receiving £multi-million funding to develop clean energy technologies towards commercial deployment in the UK. The Phase 2 technologies are:

- U-Battery: a 10MW high temperate gas-cooled micro-reactor suitable for remote and off grid applications as an embedded power source, including high temperature process heat for heavy industrial operations such as mining, chemicals and manufacturing
- Westinghouse: a 400MWe lead-cooled fast reactor technology that uses mixed oxide fuel
- Tokamak Energy: an advanced modular fusion reactor design

The Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus highlights opportunities for West Cumbria to support the development and deployment of these technologies including the development of advanced fuels.

Nuclear Sector Deal Update

In July, the Nuclear Industry Council released a document entitled “40 by 50”, which sets out a roadmap for the UK to meet its net zero by 2050 target.

More recently, the Nuclear Sector Deal New Build Cost Reduction Working Group released a report that sets out the key factors to reduce risk and bring down the cost of new nuclear power plant projects by 30% by 2030. This follows the successful demonstration of this approach by the Offshore Wind sector.

NNLAG Update

With expected UK energy policy announcements in the autumn, the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group (NNLAG) has arranged an officers meeting on 7th October.

Geological Disposal and Radioactive Waste Management Update

Members will recall that following the launch of the Government’s Working with Communities (WwC) policy and process in December 2018, the Council arranged a programme of Member briefings and presentations from a number of key stakeholders within the process including RWM Ltd, NDA, SL and CoRWM. In addition, and in view of the launch of the WwC process, a number of workshops with SNEB Members were held in the early part of this year to reconsider the Council’s Nuclear Position Statements, specifically in relation to the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste. These workshops also provided an opportunity for Members to consider the latest information regarding potential ‘Interested Parties’ in Copeland. One outcome from the workshops and

briefing sessions was that an amended set of Nuclear Position Statements were considered and subsequently agreed by Executive at its meeting on 16th March. As reported to Council in May, the intention was for the revised statement to provide an up to date and clear position to enable the Council to respond to any potential approaches from 'interested parties' as defined within the WwC process.

At an informal meeting of SNEB held on 16th June Members received an update on GDF matters which referred to on-going engagement with RWM, the latest position regarding Interested Parties in Copeland and elsewhere across the country and a potential route map and process to establishing a Working Group, should one of the Interested Parties choose to do so. Forming a Working Group is just a first step to opening discussions, scoping the questions and helping people find out more about the subject. If the process were to move beyond this, then a Community Partnership would have to be formed with at least one relevant principal local authority taking part. Such a Community Partnership would be based on an area and initial membership identified by the Working Group.

At the formal SNEB meeting held on 6th July, Members considered a paper on the current position with the UK Government's approach to identifying a site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) for higher-activity radioactive waste. The report included reference of the potential for an Interested Party to push to establish a Working Group and the 'route map' that RWM Ltd would use to support the process to the Working Group stage.

At a meeting of the Executive on 21st July, Members received an update paper similar to that considered by SNEB on 6th July. In the discussion at the meeting Executive Members proposed and agreed a number of additional recommendations to the one in the report.

That:

- in recognition of the progress that RWM Ltd are making in their search for a suitable site and a willing community to host a GDF, and the potential 'route map' of the steps that they would need to take to establish a Working Group, which is the first public facing stage of the Working with Communities process should an interested party take that decision to proceed to establish a Working Group.
- in view of the Council's position statement on GDF, which was agreed by Executive in March, containing the following key messages;
- Regardless of final location for a GDF the Copeland community is affected as current host for the vast majority of materials that are identified in the Working with Communities (WWC) Policy for disposal to a GDF and the Sellafield site will be at the front end of the operational phase of a GDF, again regardless of final location, for many decades to come

- Working in the best interests of our community the Council will engage in the process to better understand the implications for our communities and the Council reserves the right to vary or withdraw the nature of our involvement.
- The Council's engagement at the Working Group stage does not presuppose support for a GDF in Copeland or West Cumbria. According to the WwC process, any future decision on this matter will be subject to a future Test of Public Support. In the early stages, we consider it our duty to our community to engage in the process to understand the implications for Copeland of this project.

The Council opens up discussions with RWM Ltd with a view to establishing a Working Group in Copeland to explore any potential suitable sites for consideration as a location for a GDF with the following conditions attached:

1. That those areas of the Borough currently within the boundary of the Lake District National Park are excluded from any consideration from the outset
2. That in recognition of the current Working with Communities process which allows for a GDF to be located in an 'in-shore area', that the in-shore area off the coast of Copeland is worthy of consideration
3. That the Council wants to see a credible and independent Chair appointed to the Working Group and that all the Councils legitimate costs of engaging in the process are covered

Currently the Council is working with RWM and the various Interested Parties across the Borough on a range of issues that need to be considered in the process leading up to the launch of a Working Group

Offshore & Onshore Wind Updates

Offshore Wind:

In July, members of SNEB were presented an introductory paper outlining the Crown Estates Offshore Wind leasing process, which is currently underway. The areas of seabed identified in Round 4 includes an area beyond St Bees Head and therefore is of interest to the Council.

This development, should it go ahead, would be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, to which the council would be a statutory consultee.

The development itself aligns with Cumbria's clean energy ambitions and would be complementary to the Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus, potentially creating supply chain/operations and maintenance opportunities for Whitehaven and elsewhere on the West Coast.

Onshore Wind:

The three applications for the repowering existing windfarms in the Borough; Haverigg II, Haverigg III and Lowca are still pending. Outstanding issues relating to ecology are being addressed and decisions are expected mid to late autumn.

Human Resources and Health and Safety Update

Covid 19 Advice and Support

The role of the HR and H&S Service has been to advise and support Managers to ensure that the health and safety requirements of all employees were met. The key areas of support has been to focus on:

1. Coordination of absence levels for reporting of Covid 19;
2. Ensuring Line Managers have the correct guidance to manage their teams during this time. The output of this has been the implementation of the Covid Return to Work Policy and Guidance document;
3. Partnership working with Property, ICT and the Communications department to ensure the transition of our employees back to the workplace. This was completed by ensuring that the building was Covid19 compliant and employees knew the standards to adhere to. Teams have returned to the workplace on a phased and rota basis.

Please note that the intention is still to achieve ISO 45001 and bronze criteria of the TUC Health at Work Award in the first quarter of 2021 therefore, evidence has being gained against both criteria during this period.

Reshape

Our aim is to become a Modern and Progressive Council offering excellent services to our residents. This is an exciting time for some employees embracing what change brings however, at the Council, we are aware that this might be a journey that some employees do not want to be part of for a variety of understandable reasons. We therefore offered in the middle of August an opportunity for our employees to consider voluntary redundancy, in situations where the business could support that as an outcome. The closing date of this process is Friday 11 September 2020 as at the date of the report we have had 21 applications.

Vacancy Management

There has been key recruitment activity below since May 2020 in various operational areas of:

External Appointments:

Community Services Manager	Community Services
Strategic Finance Accountant	Finance
Buy Local Scheme Coordinator	Corporate Services

Internal Appointments:

Technical Assistant / Technical Officer / EHO (Career Grade)	Environmental Health
Social Inclusion and Community Resilience Team Leader	Housing

Review of Human Resources Policies and Processes

We are aware that there is a requirement for a review of our HR policies and the HR team are working in partnership with the Policy Officer to gain momentum and drive to refresh these. In this period the Support for Employees who are suffering from Domestic Abuse and the Employee Well-being Policies have been developed and implemented.

Employee Relations Support

During this time, there has been a concentrated effort to support Managers on reducing the absence rate within the Council, which since May 2020 has reduced from 1.16 % to 0.53 %.

Embedding the People Strategy

As the People Strategy was agreed in December 2019 the Council now has a clear direction for development of their employees therefore, in this period the Council has delivered learning and development focused on increasing skills within health and safety, safeguarding and equality and diversity.

HR Digital Agenda

The team are driving digital projects to support the department becoming more efficient and the workload over the past period has been development of the three projects with the aim for implementation by the end of the financial year:

1. Development of the HR Intranet. This will ensure all Managers and Employees will have relevant HR information which is accessible easily;

2. Development of a HR Help Desk. As we are a small team this will ensure the HR & H&S workflow is managed well;
3. Implementation of a HR Information System. A working system of MS Dynamics 365 has been identified as an operating model of choice. The next stage is to identify a partner to support the implementation.

Electoral and Democratic Services

The Electoral Registration Annual Canvass is currently underway, having commenced on 1st July 2020, with publication of the new electoral register due on 1 December 2020.

Each year, the Electoral Registration Officer has a legal duty to conduct an annual canvass to ensure the electoral register is accurate and complete.

The 2020 annual canvass has been reformed by the Cabinet Office. Canvass reform means that we now use national and local data matching to determine the type of communication we need to send to individual households. As a result of the data matching exercise, 82% of the properties in Copeland were identified as matched. Matched properties are ones where we have been able to match all registered electors with either the national or local databases, and are therefore confident that the information is accurate. These properties have now received an email, text message, and/or a letter outlining the details currently held on the electoral register. If the details were correct, no further action was needed from the occupants. If details had changed, occupants needed to inform us of the change, and were encouraged to respond online.

The remaining 18% of properties are unmatched, these are currently being canvassed in a similar way to that of previous years, insofar as we need to make at least three contact attempts to obtain the information. Under Canvass Reform, we now have greater flexibility in the communication methods we can use to target these properties. At the time of writing, of the 5894 unmatched properties, 45% have so far responded to our communications.

Legislation is expected soon to extend the publication date from 1st December 2020 to 1st February 2021. This will be a decision for the Electoral Registration Officer to take should we need too, however, at present we are working to a publication date of 1st December 2020.

Commercial Services – Councillor Steven Morgan

Customer Services

Customer services has had a significant increased demand as would be expected following the closure of our face to face offering at the end of Q1 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Increases of an average of 28% in calls and 38% in email traffic has been observed over Q2/Q3 in comparison to 19/20 figs.

The team who have been working from a home or office based setting have performed strongly, adapting to new ways of working and technology whilst balancing resourcing issues, redeployment of staff and leave.

Face-to-Face appointments with the public will commence at the Market Hall on an appointment only basis on 14 September 2020. Feedback received from department heads suggest that they do not anticipate significant demand as customers appear to have coped well with current work practices.

Provision for those disadvantaged customers who do not have the means to contact us is supported by the free telephone sited in the vestibule; this enables contact to our customer services and homelessness teams during opening hours.

Phased opening of other sites are expected at a later date.

Copeland Tourism Sector Development

A key driver for tourism has continued to be supporting our tourism and leisure sector during the Covid-19 lockdown, working alongside our Revenues, Environmental Health and Communications teams, helping to ensure that our eligible businesses receive the grant support that they need and are supported to open as lockdown was lifted. This has included regular newsletters with updates on grant information and links to available support.

As part of supporting tourism this summer and responding to the staycation market, we have been working with Cumbria Tourism to promote Copeland under the Lake District Coast banner and supporting recovery campaigns including “Eat out to help out”, “Ready to Go” and “Perfect Place to be”. This is being supported through the updated Western Lake District and Coast website that is bringing together the network of tourism businesses to support growth and enable existing businesses to take advantage of emerging markets.

Community Services

As government restrictions started to relax at the beginning of July the Community Services department started to return to some form of normality with the reintroduction of three

crew in a cab, weekend operations for street cleansing and the return of enforcement officers.

We continue to face challenges as we still have people who remain furloughed due to personal circumstances and where we have had to instruct staff to self-isolate to ensure we continue to abide by government guidance. We have faced ongoing vehicle issues and the crews having worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure we have continued to deliver services are now tiring and are taking well-deserved annual leave.

The tonnage collected by the kerbside recycling crews is reaching all-time highs, which is extremely positive and we hope as time goes on the trend continues. However, this also adds pressure to the service and does at times mean we are unable to complete rounds on the specified day of collection. The general waste tonnage is also increasing resulting in additional trips to the transfer station for these crews as well. Garden waste has continued to be collected on a four weekly basis to ensure that we have sufficient staff to cover all areas of the services we deliver. This is due to cease at the end of November. Many of the trade waste customers are now back on service with us and a large number of new customers have also signed up.

Street Cleansing have now returned to delivering a seven-day a week service and enforcement officers are back out and about with people who litter and fly tip being educated and challenged. The dedicated back office staff who have continued to work throughout the pandemic continue to support the whole team.

Parks and Open Spaces

APSE Performance

Each year Copeland Borough Council's Parks & Open Spaces team submits performance data to the Association of Public Sector of Excellence and is benchmarked against a family group of 13 other comparable local authorities. The latest APSE performance results (2018/19) continue to show that Copeland has not only improved its annual ranking, provides the best value parks and open space maintenance service, scoring best in its group.

Measures reveal that costs per 1000 head of population (£4523) decreased by £1040 per household when compared to the previous year. The average cost for the APSE group of 13 comparable local authorities in 2018/19 was £10,920 with the highest being £24,619 and Copeland the lowest at £4,523. The Council's costs per household of £9.21 showed a 21% reduction per household when compared to the previous year, and is the lowest of all 13 comparable councils. Our cost is significantly lower than the average cost for the APSE grouping in 2018/19, which was £24.73, the highest costs being £46.85, with Copeland Borough Council scoring the lowest at £9.21.

APSE Performance Indicator	17/18	Position	18/19	Position
Maintenance cost per 1000 head of population (PI 42b)	£5,563	5 th in family group of 17	£4,523	Best (cheapest) in the group of 13
Maintenance cost per Household (PI 43b)	£11.71	5 th in family group of 17	£9.21	Best (cheapest) in the group of 13

APSE performance networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Used by over 200 local authorities it leads the way in local government benchmarking. APSE performance networks use a 'like-for-like' system to group authorities, ensuring that a fair indication of performance can be made. The 'like-for-like' system draws on factors such as local policy, demography and size and type of operation to form the groupings.

APSE performance networks is recognised as a trusted and robust source of performance data within local government and the model met all criteria in an assessment of consistency, reliability and comparability of data required by the Audit Commission. The model has also been described as "well established and trusted to deliver information" by an independent validation by the Institute of local government studies (Inlogov) and data undergoes a rigorous error checking and three stage validation procedure to ensure that its data is robust.

Grounds Maintenance

Our Parks team have continued to operate during the Covid-19 lock-down period to ensure that our parks and green spaces were maintained and accessible for public use and enjoyment during this period, recognising the important contribution green spaces make to supporting health and wellbeing.

In addition to maintaining the Council's green space estate, the team deliver grounds maintenance services to external clients including Town and Parish Councils, schools and sports clubs. Some contract renewals and delivery this year have been impacted by Covid-

19 however, we are pleased to report that commercial activity has been steadily increasing again since the relaxation of lock down.

Alongside external services, the team have been delivering a range of works for internal departments including Environmental Health, Waste and Property, and supporting the range of office moves and team relocation activities currently underway across the estate.

Love Parks

Keep Britain Tidy has developed a new 'Love Parks' campaign to address the issue of litter being left behind in parks and green spaces across the country. The free materials available for use digitally are being used to promote the campaign message and highlight the locations of environmental crimes in parks and green spaces in Copeland. The Parks team will also be working alongside our Waste Services and Communications team colleagues who will be leading on a wider campaign of street and open space litter through the Great British Clean Up Campaign in September.

Best Kept Garden Competition

The Council recently held the Best Kept Garden competition as part of its Copeland Pride of Place campaign. The campaign has been key to the borough's significant reduction in fly tipping and littering over the past two years, and in celebrating residents who take pride in their environment. There were 21 entries from across the Borough, all of which were impressive in their own right, ranging from less formal environments through to formal and well-established gardens. The winning gardeners in Bigrigg received a £50 gardening voucher courtesy of a local garden centre in Whitehaven.

Footway Lighting

As far back as 2013, Copeland Borough Council's Executive reviewed our footway lighting policy and it was recognised that the Council could not continue to maintain the current level of footway lights within existing revenue budgets. The Council agreed to continue to facilitate requests for new lights, but only on the basis that all capital and revenue costs are wholly funded by a third party such as a Town or Parish Council. In addition, the Council's position is that it will only continue to maintain existing lights for as long as they are considered structurally sound and compliant with safety requirements. The current consultation and engagement exercise to review and prioritise footways lights continues to see the implementation of our policy position and provides Town and Parish Councils with an opportunity to influence a sustainable approach for managing and maintaining footway lighting should they continue to be required, and in advance of further assets being discontinued.

In February the Director of Corporate and Commercial Services wrote to Town and Parish Councils enclosing further information on our footway lighting consultation and invited all

to respond. Whilst feedback had been delayed, partly as a result of our collective response to the global pandemic, recent constructive discussions were held with CALC on working collaboratively to achieve a sustainable solution for footway lighting, as we continue to implement our footway lighting policy.

Through the consultation exercise and discussions with Town and Parish Councils we have been working to review, update and prioritise our footway lighting inventory to allow us to quantify and define the opportunities for future management and transfer to others. Given the opportunities that exist with other landowners and those in highway settings, the aim is to do this as fairly as possible whilst understanding local priorities and needs. Work will now commence to review the feedback received and to develop our proposals to the next stage.

Grounds Maintenance Survey

Each year we contact customers of our commercial grounds maintenance service to survey their experience of working with us, ensure they are satisfied with the services we deliver, and to invite feedback on how we may be able to improve or expand the services we provide. This valuable feedback ensures that we can continually review and improve the services we provide and we encourage our current or previous customers to participate in the survey, which can be accessed [here](#).

Bereavement Services

Our Bereavement Services team continues to support our communities at this difficult time. We have introduced a range of measures to ensure that funeral services can continue to take place at Distington Hall Crematorium and in our cemeteries in line with Government guidance, which can be found [here](#).

The latest Government guidance strongly encourages people to wear a face covering in enclosed public spaces, and this extends to funeral services in crematoria. The crematorium chapel is currently able to accommodate a maximum number of 30 attendees at any one time (including the funeral director and clergy/celebrant), however social distancing must be observed between attendees and family groupings, which may limit the attendance capacity. We continue to work closely with our funeral directors to manage and record attendance at funeral services where it is advised that only a modest number of family and friends of the deceased should travel to and attend services. We understand how difficult and upsetting this advice will be but it is important that this continues to be respected for the safety of all.

Whilst the Chapel of Remembrance remains closed, an online version of the Book of Remembrance is available to view [here](#).

We continue to promote a range of partner organisations who provide advice and guidance for those who have suffered a bereavement including – the [NHS](#), [Cruse](#), Age UK - [coping with bereavement](#) and [arranging a funeral](#)

The Beacon

The Beacon Museum has reopened for September 2020, after a refresh of exhibition layouts and the implementation of a thorough COVID-safe plan. The museum is fully accessible with a revised one-way system, gallery capacity restrictions and cleaning regimen enforced by the upskilled visitor host team. Whilst initial numbers have been extremely encouraging, the team are under no illusion about the challenges posed currently to all heritage attractions, and moving forward the goal will be to engage local users to visit during the off-season and also attract return visitors who have been unable to attend.

Schools outreach will be adapted to get our renowned learning programme to where the pupils are, with school visits likely to be affected for a prolonged time. This will be a key focus in the museum digitisation programme which is currently being rolled out, with new installations being installed monthly in our galleries until February. The feel of the museum will change with new exhibits adding to or replacing text panels and older parts of the exhibition. The refresh will also enable the team to digitise elements of the museum collection and offer much better outreach both in events and in remotely accessible digital content. It is understood that Sellafield will be re-evaluating the content within the Sellafield story exhibition during 2021, with a similar refresh on the horizon.

The annual exhibitions and events programme has been understandably affected by the closure and delay of plans for 2020. Some exhibitions such as the current feature BEARS! have been rescheduled from September onwards into 2021. However, with many plans abandoned the team are working to reduce dependency on external exhibitions as a long-term goal. This would aim to deliver more frequent small changes to the museum with the addition of the new digital experiences mirroring local content with greater opportunities for volunteering and community involvement.

One element that will be changing during the autumn months will be the reopening of the Beacon hospitality space, formerly known as the Wellington Bistro. Renovation work has been completed after lockdown delays during the spring and summer months to replace the floor and elements of the roof structure. The space will be marketed in coming weeks to find a new tenant that will work closely with the museum to deliver a food service for both visitors and passing footfall. With guaranteed footfall and prime location, the team are confident that a suitor will be found quickly and we ask for your help in sharing this opportunity.

Procurement Briefing Note

By working alongside Project Teams, Procurement have successfully advertised the following opportunities to ensure value for money and compliance with Public Contract Regulations 2015 and our Contract Standing Orders, including:

- ✓ Consultancy Services to assist in the preparation of town investment plans and full business cases to support Towns Fund Initiative applications
- ✓ Purchase of blue refuse sacks
- ✓ Construction of a new Beach Café at Silecroft Beach, Millom
- ✓ Future High Streets Fund: Initial Professional Services (Utilising Cumbria County Council Framework)
- ✓ Connecting Copelands Hidden Coast - Photography of Copeland Coast
- ✓ Connecting Copelands Hidden Coast – Film/Drone Footage of Copeland Coast

The Beach Café construction tender is still in progress and will close on 5th October 2020 to allow evaluation to take place.

Other scheduled projects in the preparation stages ready for tender and currently liaising with Procurement are:

- 3G Artificial Grass Pitch at Cleator Moor Activity Centre in conjunction with Greenwich Leisure
- Building Maintenance of Council owned buildings
- Refurbishment of roof covering at Distington Crematorium Chapel
- Flood prevention work on flap valves at Parton and Millom
- Footway lighting inspection contract
- Building Cleaning for all Council owned buildings

Future scheduled projects

The proposed use of framework agreements for the following:

- The replacement of multi-functional devices (printers/scanners) across the authority – this was held for review given the recent pandemic and our need for this service visibly reduced
- Continuing electronic payment collection services for residents
- Professional services for an Initial Assessment of the coastal erosion and flood risk at St Bees and Seascale as part of Flood and Coastal Risk Management
- New IT System for social housing allocations – County wide procurement with other Local Authorities and Housing Associations (led by South Lakes District Council)
- Future High Streets Fund: Major Works – subject to grant approval
- Insolvency Resolution Services

- Postal Services for Revenues and Benefits
- Council Tax reduction scheme Modelling

There has been a positive increase in procurement activity throughout the whole Authority during the first half of the year with department interactions with the service on the rise compared to previous years. The current pandemic has fortunately had little impact on the running of the Procurement Service. There have been only minor changes to processes and ways of working which are now well embedded into the service, with Procurement - like the majority of staff – mitigating the change to remote working successfully. The pandemic has understandably brought about many changes within the Procurement field and a number of issued Procurement policy notes from Government has resulted in an increase in the number of free webinars available from advisors to directly assist buyers with the potential impact of COVID19, which have all been well received. Our Procurement software provider have also introduced detailed webinar training on the different functionalities of our procurement portal; and we have used these to our advantage by committing some time to improve the portal and streamline processes.

Environment, Place and Inclusive Communities – Councillor Andy Pratt

Environment

Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership

The Cumbria Climate Change Working Group established by the Cumbria Leaders Board in 2019 has successfully secured £2.5m of grant funding from the National Lottery Climate Action Fund, one of 15 recipients from an initial 600 UK-wide applications. This funding will support the delivery of a countywide community-led programme of interventions aimed at reducing emissions and creating sustainable long-term impacts across areas including community energy generation, what we eat and what we buy. The funding includes allocations for:

- Shared officer support to local authorities in development and implementation of climate/environment plans
- Establishment of governance structures relating to climate action, and giving young people a voice in holding leaders to account over emissions
- Education and learning
- Community support and events
- Funding and expert support for community energy projects

Renewables

Earlier this year a grant was awarded to the Council from the Local Government Association's Productivity Expert Programme. This Programme aims to help local authorities identify opportunities to generate efficiencies and/or income. Using the grant funding, the Council has appointed expert consultants to deliver this piece of work.

The project will:

- Assess the energy efficiency of the Council's properties;
- Undertake an assessment of existing vehicle fleet to understand potential for electrification;
- Explore the opportunity for rooftop solar installation on council properties to offset energy costs; and,
- Identify and examine potential sites for commercial-scale solar generation.

This project contributes to both the Council's climate action/carbon reduction plans and to the commercialisation agenda.

Strategic Housing

Homelessness

Impact of the Pandemic on Services

The team has seen an increase in demand of over 500% since March 2020. Much of the contact has been around housing advice and fear of losing tenancies during the pandemic. The team have dealt with far more homeless people (i.e. people who had nowhere to stay that night) than over the same period last year; with 27 compared to 7 between April and August last year.

The majority of the homeless cases have been young single people or couples asked to leave by family and friends during lock down. Often the cause of homelessness has been due to chaotic or risky behaviour. Of those people, all bar 5 have been permanently rehoused. Those 5 are people who are chaotic drug or alcohol users and whose behaviour needs to be managed in a supported environment. They are accommodated in temporary accommodation whilst a pathway for them is found.

Domestic Abuse

We have supported double the number of domestic abuse victims than during the same period last year with 46 as opposed to 23 last year. The take up was initially slow but following a publicity campaign, it increased to unprecedented numbers. We are currently supporting 3 males who are victims of abuse at home and a transgender person and so it is important to stress that the service is gender neutral.

MHCLG Funding Round

MHCLG began working actively within Cumbria last year and facilitated funding for 1.5 workers with rough sleepers and sofa-surfers. This has been critical during the pandemic. MHCLG has now opened a new round of funding called Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to ensure no one housed during the pandemic goes back to being homeless. Copeland BC and Impact Housing Association has submitted a joint bid for a project of around a million pounds of capital and revenue over 3 years. The project is to bring an empty property in Impact's ownership back into use as 4 flats for homeless people with challenging behaviour and substance abuse and create a 24 support service around the flats. The Copeland Police Hub and Unity Drug and Alcohol services have been involved in supporting the idea. This will assist with people such as those described above that are hard to house and referral, should we get the funding, will be via the Councils Homeless Service.

Housing Strategy

Housing Needs Survey

The 2020 Housing Needs Survey has been completed and key findings will be presented to OSC prior to its launch on 17th September 2020 at the Copeland Housing Partnership.

The Council has a statutory duty to assess housing need under the Housing Act 1985. The Housing Needs Survey is commissioned by Strategic Housing to assess current and projected future housing need across all tenure types and demographic. This process complements the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which supports the Local Plan and the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey as well as informing Corporate Housing and Planning Policies. It is also used to inform planning application responses. The last survey was commissioned in 2011.

The survey was sent out via post, with an option to reply digitally, to a random sample of households in the following areas:

Whitehaven – 1/3 of households

Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom – 80% of households

100% sample for:

Arlecdon & Rowrah; Beckermet; Bigrigg; Calderbridge; Cleator; Distington; Drigg & Holmrook; Frizington; Haverigg; Keekle; Kirkland & Ennerdale Bridge; Low Moresby & Howgate; Lowca; Moor Row; Moresby Parks; Parton; Sandwith; Seascale; St Bees; The Hill, The Green & Hallthwaites and Thornhill.

In total 2652, responses were received from a mailing of 24,963 (10.6% response rate). Lower than hoped due to COVID but the consultants are confident it is a reliable sample from which to draw conclusions.

Of those that replies:

- 80% of properties are owned, and almost half of those owned outright.
- 75% of people aged up to 34 own their own homes, reflecting relatively low process and high earnings.
- Dominant household size was 2 people (42%) followed by 1 person (29%)
- There were low levels of dissatisfaction with the ability of the property to meet needs (3%) and condition (4%)
- Where conditions were considered poor the main reasons were damp/mould issues (42%) and general repair (33%)
- There are very few one bed homes – half of all properties had 3 bedrooms with 2 beds being the next popular.
- Most tenures were spread fairly evenly but there are higher proportions of Housing Association tenants in Cleator Moor and Egremont and lower proportions of private renters in the Whitehaven Rural Housing Market sub-area.
- 22% of respondents recorded a household member limited in their day to day activities by disability or long term illness (mostly in older groups)
- 6% of the sample expected to need adaptations to their property in the next 5 years
- 22% of respondents thought they would move in the next 5 years (highest amongst younger groups)
- 46% of newly forming households cannot afford to buy an averaged priced property without spending more than 33% of their gross income on a mortgage and a third cannot afford a lower quartile home – indicating an unmet need for affordable housing
- The older stock profile across Copeland (particularly in the private sector) means properties are difficult to adapt and do not lend themselves to wheelchair use.
- There is a clear need for additional bungalows to buy and rent across the whole market, sheltered and extra care housing as well as for new developments to be built to 'lifetime standards' – catering for buyers and renters.
- There is no strong indication of a drift away from rural areas to urban ones.
- The main market for Town Centre dwellings are young professionals, contractors and overseas students, who seek good quality rented accommodation.

The final report will include conclusions and recommendations for each Parish/Town surveyed, and will be available to all members upon request after launch on 17th September.

Copeland Work & Skills Partnership

As a result of Coronavirus, some elements to the programme have been adapted to enhance accessibility of clients.

- IAG NVQs – 17 candidates have engaged with IAG qualifications at Level 3 / 4 during the first year of the programme and 5 candidates completed qualifications this summer.
- Sector Development / Bespoke Support – An online bespoke support programme has been delivered during August offering mini-masterclasses. The aim of these motivational speaking sessions has been to help individuals to create a foundation of positive change in their lives to gain and retain jobs and relationships. A total of 102 individuals have engaged over four sessions.
An online Sector Based Work Academy Programme working in conjunction with Wyndham Manor Care Home was completed during July. The aim of the programme was to prepare individuals for work in a residential care home in roles such as Care Coordinators, Support Workers, Domestic Assistants and Kitchen Assistants. Eight unemployed individuals completed the programme with five being offered jobs at the end of the programme.
- Employability Fund – Three individuals have benefited from being supported by the Employability Fund. One individual, currently being supported by Groundwork Choices, is able to complete an online course (Mental Health L2) due to now having access to IT equipment. Two individuals have been supported with the costs towards their SIA Licence applications and have secured employment as a result.
- Apprentice Subsidy – Three individuals commenced apprenticeships during June – August. Employers supporting apprentices include Paul Douglas Building & Groundworks and Together We Can x 2.
- Wage Subsidy – Four candidates have secured employment via the wage subsidy workstream this quarter. Employers who have recruited include: Joe Moyes Carpentry, Ennerdale Brewery, Maxwell Flooring and The Helpful Book Company. Of the five candidates who have completed the 26-week programme to date, all have remained in employment with their respective employer.