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South Lakeland District Council

Making South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore

Council Plan 2014-2019

Economy – Enabling and delivering opportunities for sustainable economic growth

Housing – Providing homes to meet need

Environment – Protecting our environment

Health & Wellbeing – Improving health and reducing health inequalities

Our Vision

The council's vision is "Making South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore."

Our four priorities to achieve this in South Lakeland are:

- **Economy**
- **Housing**
- **Environment**
- **Health and Wellbeing**

With our long term ambition for **1000 jobs and 1000 affordable homes for rent**

Working with public and private sector partners the district council will from 2015 to 2025 enable delivery of 1000 new high value jobs and 1000 new affordable homes for rent.

Regional and National Context

The Government's National Housing Strategy published in November 2011 seeks to increase significantly the supply of new homes across the country. This is re-enforced by The National Planning Policy Framework which requires councils to meet identified needs in full and requires a five-year supply of new housing land to be maintained. The strategy also supports innovative means of delivering new affordable housing. The factors driving Government housing policy, limited supply, unaffordability for many people and the economic impacts of housing under-delivery are all manifest in South Lakeland.

Achieving, maximising and removing barriers to economic growth are central to the Government's economic strategy. This means making sites available, delivering critical infrastructure, removing barriers such as unnecessary regulation and ensuring that councils plan positively for growth and jobs.

The government has substantially reduced funding to local authorities and this on-going squeeze on public expenditure, in addition to the need to deliver more for less, has a significant impact on the council budget. With a potential deficit of (add later) in 2014-15, estimated to rise to 2million by 2016-17 the council has a strategy to deliver a balanced budget as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Several Welfare Reform changes have already been implemented including the abolition of the Council Tax Benefit Scheme and introduction of its replacement, the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The introduction from April 2013 of the Housing Benefit Under Occupancy Rules followed by the Benefit Cap in July 2013 have been unpopular but the council has provided a large amount of information about the way the changes will affect individuals and worked closely with our social landlords to try as far as possible to reduce the impact on vulnerable people. We will continue to monitor the impact of these changes already introduced.

Introduction of the Universal Credit will be a further challenge and although it is acknowledged the council will play no part in the processing of claims we will nevertheless try, in conjunction with the Department of Work and Pensions and our other partners, to assist in the transition to the new scheme by providing advice, guidance and assistance as our claimants transfer to the new scheme. The impacts of these have yet to be fully felt but are likely to affect the Council's housing and homelessness services as well as those of affordable housing providers.

The Energy and Climate Change agenda remains a key focus for government with international leaders looking to have a legally binding agreement in place by 2015, in order to further reduce our carbon emissions. This will require us to reduce our own carbon footprint further and build on the successes of previous carbon reduction schemes.

Public Health and Wellbeing responsibilities have moved from the NHS to local authorities and, although Cumbria County Council has the lead role, the District has an opportunity for a joined up approach to improving public health in Cumbria, with the other Districts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, GPs and other stakeholders.

We recognise that although the proportion of older people is rising nationally, this is significantly greater in rural areas. Older people make a significant contribution to the local economy and the cultural and social

welfare of our communities. We will continue to work with our Third Sector partners and agencies to ensure our residents' health and wellbeing needs are met and represent their interests nationally and across the North West.

We will fight for our rural communities to get recognition of our rural issues. The Government's programme of welfare reform has implications for many residents of South Lakeland. As a result the council will need to review and reduce the impact on the poorest and most disadvantaged people, particularly those in the rural communities.

Our Strategy

The council's five year strategy has been reviewed and the plan of action for delivering on our priorities is now incorporated into this Council Plan. The council's five year strategy was to deliver a smaller, more sustainable portfolio of services operating within the financial resources available to it. It is recognised that, to continually deliver on our vision, we need a more community focused strategy to deliver sustainable and cost effective services. We need to make further significant efficiencies over the next five years and will increasingly look to share work with our communities in addressing common issues.

To achieve this we will need a mixed approach to service delivery. The model we choose will be dependent on a sound business case and the most efficient delivery method, retaining in-house or private sector delivery where appropriate to do so. We will look to develop a social enterprise type approach where possible. We will do this in a number of ways:

More Local

We will continue to embrace neighbourhood working, engaging communities and empowering them to deliver on things that matter locally whilst setting, and delivering on, strategic priorities for the District.

We will continue to promote the local agenda, working with the voluntary sector, community groups and parish and town councils to devolve services and/or council assets where there is an appetite to do so, and looking at how communities can influence the way services are delivered.

We will encourage and support the Local Area Partnerships to become more independent, encouraging them to become self-sufficient and transformational in responding to their communities' needs.

Partnership Working and Collaboration

With our partners we will develop our role to influence and lobby at a national, regional and county level to ensure the needs of the area are recognised and supported.

Through partnership working we will continue to build on our successes to identify current and future opportunities for shared delivery of projects and a more collaborative approach to service provision. For example, we are working with key agencies across the district through the One South Lakeland Partnership to develop and coordinate economic and health initiatives.

Working across Cumbria through the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership we will work with both public and private sector partners to deliver joint projects around economic growth.

We will look at opportunities for increased collaborative working with other councils to enable a more joined up approach to service delivery which will further improve customer service and seek efficiencies. We will explore where there is opportunity to deliver services more locally.

Stewardship

The council will continue to plan and manage its resources effectively and will enhance its role as an environmental steward, responsible for conserving and enhancing the environment in which our communities live, work and explore. This role ensures that the council carries out its day to day business in a more efficient way and, through its plans and policies, ensures sustainable development for the area. It will also promote environmental projects that provide both carbon reductions and cost efficiencies to our communities.

Entrepreneurship

Through our Innovation and Improvement work, we will look at where there are opportunities to reduce costs by using our knowledge and skills to become more entrepreneurial in the way we do business. We

will also continue to build on our successes and identify opportunities for further shared service arrangements.

Our Members, Our Workforce

Our elected Members now have greater responsibility for leading on places and communities. They act as advocates to ensure that the needs of the local communities are identified, understood and supported by the council. They are best-placed to understand the needs and priorities of their local areas and will actively seek opportunities to work collaboratively with other organisations to achieve delivery.

We recognise that, to deliver the council priorities, we need not only a sustainable budget but a workforce that is in the right place at the right time, with the skills and motivation to deliver the highest quality services to our customers and empower community development. Our Workforce Plan sets out the challenges facing the council over the next five years in recruiting, retaining and developing the workforce but especially focuses on the need to encourage young people into work through graduate and apprenticeship opportunities and to encourage them to stay in the district.

Our Values

The delivery of this Council Plan is influenced by our three key values. These are:

Empowering People

Listening to the users of our services and our employees, addressing their concerns and using their ideas and comments to inform us on improvements to service and workforce development;

Excellence

Seeking continuous improvement in what we do, ensuring that our actions address the needs of South Lakeland; and

Open and Transparent

Being courteous, efficient and transparent in our dealings with the public.

Our District

Geographic Area

South Lakeland covers an area of 600 square miles and is the largest district in the county. It includes major parts of both the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. South Lakeland is largely rural with a varied landscape of coastline, woodland, rolling countryside, lakes and mountains and is recognised as one of the country's finest areas for its quality of life. It is the 10th largest district in England and is classed as sparsely populated with 68 people per square kilometre. The average UK population density is 261 per square kilometre. In Cumbria only Eden with 25 people per square kilometre is less populated.

Population

103,700 people live in South Lakeland, an increase of 1,300 since 2001. The district has a low proportion of residents aged below 45 (45.3%) and a high and growing proportion aged over 65 (24.3%), when compared to the UK as a whole. The average age in South Lakeland is 45.4 which has the highest average age when compared to the rest of Cumbria.

Housing

There are 53,422 dwellings in South Lakeland, a 7.7% increase over the last 10 years. The current median house price in the district is £210,394, which is 38% higher than the North West, and the highest in Cumbria. The median house price in South Lakeland is 8.0 times the median household income.

Employment

As a percentage South Lakeland has the lowest working age population in Cumbria with 59.3% of the district's population aged 16 to 64 and is lower than the Cumbria average (61.9%). South Lakeland has low levels of unemployment. 1.1% of the working population is unemployed and claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). Most of the District's workforce is employed in the services sector, with one in five employed in tourism. 14.6% are self-employed, which is significantly higher than the national average. The

average weekly wage in South Lakeland is £478.60. This is slightly lower than the Cumbria average (£481.40) and considerably lower than the England average (£508.00).

Health and Wellbeing

With higher life expectancy, high participation in sport and lower than average obesity levels, health and wellbeing in South Lakeland is generally better than the national average. Levels of crime are very low in South Lakeland, with a reduction in overall crime in the last three years.

Our Priorities

Our Economy

Enabling and delivering opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

What is our economic ambition?

- **The council will embrace its role in bringing better paid jobs to South Lakeland**

We will implement the Local Plan and seek to maximise the delivery of better paid jobs.

We will, where land is available, use our resources, skills and knowledge to lead and shape the regeneration of areas in need of change such as Kendal's and Ulverston's Canal Head areas.

We will introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy to help deliver critical infrastructure to support new development and provide local facilities.

- **We will help our towns to thrive commercially whilst retaining their distinctive character**

We will, by using the Local Plan, enable sustainable development throughout the district in particular Kendal, Grange-over-Sands, Ulverston and Kirkby Lonsdale, and provide opportunities for employment growth, housing, retail, accessible services and enhancement of their distinctive character.

We will work in partnership with local traders and Town and Parish Councils to create town centre plans that set out the vision for our towns over the next 10 years to help secure their future and encourage investment from the private and public sectors.

We will work in partnership with the Town and Parish Councils and local businesses to develop a plan to address the issues of empty shops and empty properties above shops.

Where there is an appetite and sound rationale, we will seek opportunities to devolve services and transfer or sell local assets to Parish and Town Councils and community groups.

We will undertake a strategic review of South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) controlled car parks to increase the economic benefits in the towns across the district. We will explore options for sustainable transport schemes including walking and cycling and opportunities for installing electric vehicle charging points.

We will produce options for Kendal's Westmorland Shopping Centre multi-storey car park for the next 10 to 15 years.

We will work with our partners to continue to improve and enhance facilities for lake users on Windermere through our investment at Waterhead in Ambleside and the Ferry Nab development at Bowness-on-Windermere.

We will promote Wi-Fi in our town centres and look for cost effective ways to provide this.

We will encourage and facilitate specialist markets, complementing the role of our traditional markets and attracting more people to our town centres.

We will work with our local communities to promote the Community Toilet Scheme.

- **We will achieve inward investment to at least three major employment sites creating 1000 new jobs**

We will work in partnership with the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and local businesses to deliver high value sustainable jobs.

We will promote the M6 corridor to encourage and secure growth in towns and rural areas.

We will maximise our growth potential from the major investment in advanced manufacturing in both the Furness area and to the east of the district, ensuring links are made with developing the workforce, training and skills and the delivery of new housing, leisure, and community and visitor facilities.

We will develop our Invest in South Lakeland and Explore South Lakeland websites to promote new business establishments, tourism and the marketing of local events. Our website will promote South Lakeland as a world-class destination for business.

We will work with the One South Lakeland Partnership to develop opportunities for economic growth through skills and education, to create highly skilled workforces and develop opportunities for apprenticeships. This includes working with the National Parks to facilitate the delivery of our economic growth ambition in both rural and urban areas.

Housing

“Providing homes to meet need”

What is our housing ambition?

- **The council will enable delivery of new affordable and open market housing particularly through private sector led developments across the district**

We will work in partnership with private housing developers to maximise the delivery of new market and affordable homes on allocated housing sites, including the creation of **1000 new affordable homes for rent** over the period 2015-2025.

We will work with housing association partners to develop a new four-year affordable housing development programme from 2015-2019.

We will work in partnership with Grange Town Council to develop council-owned land in Grange-over-Sands (the Berners Site) into a flagship scheme with a mix of affordable housing including rented and shared ownership.

We will implement our current Local Plan, including in 2014/15, the completion of 7 Development Briefs for major sites (covering 45ha of housing land) with the strong involvement of communities, Parish and Town Councils.

We will work with Parish and Town Councils to deliver additional new homes through Neighbourhood Plans.

We will commence work on the successor to the Local Plan with increased engagement with Town and Parish Councils in 2017.

We will commence preparation of Development Management Policies in 2015 including reviewing and updating environmental standards and will encourage innovative green build projects.

We will use the New Homes Bonus to help fund affordable housing and locally important projects.

We will continue to work with other Cumbrian local authorities to deliver the Cumbria Housing Strategy to address issues such as suitable housing for an ageing population with appropriate levels of support in accessible locations and providing a range of housing for young people to attract them to the area and keep them here.

- **Through enabling collaborative housing solutions the council and its partners will significantly reduce the risk of homelessness**

We will deliver our homelessness strategy and implementation plan to reduce homelessness, provide the correct support for those who need it and manage the impact of welfare reforms.

- **The quality and condition of private sector housing will be improved and the number of empty homes reduced**

We will promote a landlord accreditation scheme to help raise the standard of privately rented homes.

We will continue to work with owners and housing providers to bring empty homes back into use.

We will present a case to Government, through the Sustainable Communities Act, for the local control of the conversion of permanently occupied houses to second homes and holiday lets.

- **The council will enable more affordable housing by investing through its Capital Programme**

We will continue to use our own resources to enable affordable housing.

Environment

Protecting our Environment

What is our environmental ambition?

- **The council will enable residents to reduce the total amount of household waste and extend the range of recycled materials from the kerbside**

We will extend the kerbside recycling, by increasing the range of recyclables collected and the way existing and new materials are collected.

We will explore options to create essential facilities needed to support the disposal of new materials collected from the kerbside and as a result create a sustainable waste collection service.

- **The council and its residents will progress in reducing carbon emissions and become more energy efficient**

We will commit to further reducing the council's operational carbon footprint.

We will through our regulatory and procurement activity, influence others to reduce their carbon footprint.

We will, through the promotion of advice networks and community engagement, enable our communities and individuals to deliver carbon reductions and thus benefit from financial savings.

We will work with our private sector housing providers to ensure that their residents live in energy-efficient homes.

We will promote the Green Deal and other schemes to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty.

We will support local communities that seek to develop micro-energy generating projects.

- **Communities and the council will ensure that the District's high quality environment is enhanced and makes a positive contribution to its quality of life**

We will, through the preparation of development briefs, encourage the best standards for new developments, demonstrating quality and sustainability in their preparation, planning and operation.

We will positively address the quality of life issues for our residents, such as reducing dog fouling, fly tipping and addressing environmental nuisance complaints.

Health and Wellbeing

Improving health and reducing health inequalities

What is our health & wellbeing ambition?

- **Through our partnership working we will retain our position as a safe place to live, work and explore**

We will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Community Safety Partnership to deliver the priorities around reducing domestic violence, drugs and alcohol misuse and anti-social behaviour.

- **The council and its partners will enable health improvements through collaborative and preventative action, targeted at addressing health needs and reducing health inequalities**

We will publicise the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy and work with partners to deliver its three key themes around the wider influences on health and wellbeing, health improvement through healthy lives and physical activity and health protection.

We will work with the young and older people of South Lakeland to ensure that they have a greater voice in the democratic process and can influence policy development that affects their future wellbeing. This will include projects to improve the wellbeing of older people through increased awareness of dementia, support for early intervention for reducing isolation and providing adaptations to enable people to remain in their homes longer.

We will work with North County Leisure to deliver sustainable and modern leisure facilities and programmes that are accessible to our residents and visitors.

We will implement a new Disabled Facilities Grants policy that delivers improved value for money.

We will continue to work with others to enable a crematorium facility in South Lakeland.

- **We will build upon our cultural reputation as a place for nationally recognised events and festivals programme**

We will promote South Lakeland as a premier area for arts and events, and work with other organisations to develop a year-round calendar of events, improving the wellbeing of our residents and increasing the economic benefit provided by visitors to our district.

We will work with partners to promote both established and emerging cycle events to the area and encourage cycle tourism through the Explore South Lakeland website.

- **Through community engagement and facilitation we will make best use of our assets**

We will ensure that community groups are encouraged to make best use of our parks and open spaces

We will work with local organisations and communities to look at opportunities to maximise the use of our community buildings.

We will work in partnership to support the establishment of a Credit Union in South Lakeland to broaden people's financial choices.

How will we deliver our priorities?

Ensuring we are equipped to provide the best, most cost effective services

- **Through a flexible and skilled workforce**

Having achieved the 'Investors in People' award we will embed its principals into the organisation, through our personal performance appraisals and learning and development programme.

We will continue to develop our skilled workforce with a more flexible, coordinated approach to working across services. This will support continuous improvement, help build partnership working, increase shared service and support more devolved services.

We will champion a high performance culture throughout SLDC and continue the delivery of quality, value for money services to the people of South Lakeland.

- **Through our community leaders**

Our elected Members act as community leaders and engage with, and are advocates for, local people. In order to carry out their roles effectively they need to have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding. We will ensure they are given the training they need to effectively represent the residents of South Lakeland.

- **Through a sustainable budget**

The council will ensure it has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience.

The council will ensure that through its Medium Term Financial Strategy, the challenges of a reduction in support from central government funding and the impact of the economic climate are regularly reviewed and proposals to resolve potential short and longer term deficits are developed and delivered.

We will ensure the economic, efficient and effective use of its resources to achieve the optimum level of value for money.

We will ensure that the proper stewardship, governance and financial management of resources is maintained.

- **Through improved customer engagement and communication**

We will embrace new technology to improve access to services for our customers and create opportunities for increased efficiencies.

Our improved technology will encourage feedback from customers which will be used to inform and improve service delivery.

We will embrace our new Communications Strategy ensuring all of our communication methods are recognised by our corporate style and that the messages are appropriate, effective, written in plain English and accessible to all.

The council will continually strive to be an open and transparent organisation, where people feel valued and encouraged to share new ideas and have clear performance targets, which support the council priorities.

Back page: **Contact us**

We welcome all feedback.

If you have any comments or questions, or would like further information, please contact us.

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You can view this plan online at:

www.southlakeland.gov.uk

February 2013

Picture - Equality box

–how to access in other formats