

Council Plan Delivery Framework Discussion 25.7.23

Report by Michael Hanley

This was a meeting of Eden WAF councillors on 25.7.23 at Penrith. It was presented by Alison Hatcher. The council plan will be delivered between now and 2028 was discussed. There will be three pillars: equity, environment and economy. Equity: tackling health inequalities, social exclusion and other inequalities. Environment: climate change and biodiversity loss. Economy: respond to pressures from the changing demographic and the need to grow productivity. Progress will be measured by quarterly reporting. The aim is to do things better and do things differently and so improve outcomes. The final document will go to the council cabinet on the 12th of September for approval.

The overall vision of the plan is that this area is a great place to live, work and thrive. There will be six priorities: economy and culture, communities, people, climate, workforce and customers. As mentioned before this will rest on three pillars: equity, environment and economy.

Lastly, there will be ten strategic delivery themes: communities, homes, learning, care, health and wellbeing, connections, environment, culture, growth and service. There is more detail on each of these themes in the document. For example in Connections, every town, village and hamlet will have access to 4G and fibre internet connections and there will be more sustainable travel options. There will be a drive to increase house building, including affordable homes.

With Care there will be £2.6 million available for Cumbria Care Residential Homes.

Connections: we are the most sparsely populated Unitary Authority. Travel times are greater. Internet connectivity will be improved. It is planned that there will be a new model of transport designed for rural communities to support rural mobility and overcome barriers to travel. This will include greater access to public transport for young people in rural areas to help reduce social isolation.

Environment: The council's emissions are predicted to be 67k tonne CO₂e. This will be reduced to net zero as soon as possible but it is only 2-5% of the area's emissions. The council will work with other emitters to achieve net zero by 2037. A new tree will be planted for every resident and there will be a 20% biodiversity gain on every new development. Community energy project, solar allotments and community planting and food growing will be encouraged.

Culture: £250k will go to a Culture Recovery Fund to help venues recover. Borderland Place Plan will provide £3 million to improve town centres in Dalton, Penrith and Ulverston. £16 million will go to redevelop Barrow market (from Levelling Up Fund). There will be support for national cultural events such as Kendal Calling, Kendal Mountain Festival and the Big North Swim.

Growth: Productivity varies across the area: 8% above national average in Barrow but 15% below in Eden and 20% below in South Lakeland. There is a low rate of business start ups in the area. BAE will be starting a new submarine programme which will bring lots of jobs to Barrow. It is expected that there will be 7000 new jobs in Barrow, a workforce growth of 15%.

Discussion:

Phil Dew (PD,C): Where will the capacity come from to deliver this? Will you not overstretch hard working staff?

Alison Hatcher (AH, WAF officer): We have to be realistic about what we can do. It will be a year on year programme.

PD: Discussed the "icing on the cake" such as community involvement.

Mary Robinson (MR, I): Staff are looking at the schools. The Locality Board (Eden) needs to have the information about their areas so we can find out where the inequalities are. People are struggling, especially during holidays when they are relying on grandparents (to help with

childcare). The council has to have equality. There is a bad feeling about the support some of our communities have, there is a lot of anger starting.

AH: We have to make sure there is equity across the area.

John Murray (JM, LD): The locality board has a key role to play with communities. We are closest with our local communities. If people see that it is fair, but things don't have to be exactly the same. JM discussed street lighting and what the council plan means to our parishes and residents. Investment in Youth Services often is not mentioned. I went to the new Youth Centre in Kirkby Stephen yesterday. We need to make this sustainable. A well funded Youth Service is really vital.

MR: A Youth Mental Health Service is also vital.

Virginia Taylor (VT, LD): Discussed the plan.

AH: The delivery themes are largely in line with the portfolios (LD councillors who are members of the cabinet (council governing body) each have an area of responsibility such as Housing or Health and these are called portfolios).

VT: If we have a delivery plan it should discuss what is deliverable. I am experiencing this in my own portfolio.

AH: This document doesn't capture everything that the council does.

MR: If I take this to one of my parish councils, they will ask about the repair of a footpath and footway lighting. They are not worried about the things discussed in this document, they are concerned about concrete problems. The logistics of tying ourselves up in knots has been learned. Capacity is going to be our biggest driver. With a general election, things will change. We need to walk before we can run.

AH: If we are clear about our outcomes, we will know what success looks like. We can focus on year one deliverables. We will review progress every six months. We will have an annual report and that will build up year on year.

MR: This needs to be built on the budget. We need to make more emphasis on the building blocks. As John Murray said, more devolution to the localities.

AH: This will need to evolve, it is a framework.

PD: This is turning into a monologue from Mary.

Andy Connell (AC, LD): We should discourage grievances based on ignorance such as people saying Barrow is getting a lot more. The document mentions a bus service improvement plan. We need to do a holistic view of the current situation.

Hilary Carrick (HC, C): The council plan is admirable. My caution is management of expectations. Our communities will look at this and say what does it mean for us. They are concerned what is done from week to week. There is a lot of emphasis in the document on change. What needs to be done differently needs to be considered. We are not creating a council plan from a blank sheet of paper. We need to focus on what wasn't done so well. If we scrapped everything and tried to do everything differently and made no change, that would be the worst outcome. We need to focus on what is deliverable.

AH: Now we are one authority as opposed to three district and one county council, it may make it easier to do things differently. There has to be ways that people living in rural areas don't have to always use a private car.

PD: There are things in this that are good. I fully concur with Andy regarding buses. We need harmonisation.

VT: I don't think this is rural-proof. We need to continue with rural development. The three districts were all very different in how they did things. The EDC economic rural programme has gone.

AH: It is one council. There are different challenges in different areas.

MR: Discussed grants coming in for different areas and the importance of not missing these opportunities.

AH: It is a journey we are on and this is the first road map.

JM: I am taken aback about how negative Phil (PD) can be on something he supports. There is (in the document) a good description of what success will look like. We need to be agile to get any funding that comes along.

Lorna Baker (LB, LD): We mend the roads, we know that, we just need the funding. The buses, doing that cleverly will make a difference. Superfast broadband is coming. The government is paying Fibrus and residents are shouting at us. We have no control.

PD: Discussed the A66 improvement. Another thing is Voreda House (where Eden area local office will move to from the Town Hall). It will make a big impact on the delivery of services. We have not had any updates on this.

AH: The plan will go to scrutiny in August and then to the cabinet in September.