

COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR COPELAND

Meeting date: 15 March 2023

From: Assistant Director – Customer and
Community Services

AREA MANAGER REPORT

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 *The purpose of this report is to bring Members up to date with the activity across Copeland and any recent developments.*
- 1.2 *Area planning activity continues in the form of key projects and area working activity including development of projects and schemes associated with additional internal and external funding.*

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 *The Copeland Local Committee has both executive and non-executive duties as set out in the County Council's constitution.*
- 2.2 *Copeland local committee is committed to the following priorities:*
- *Improving outcomes for Young People*
 - *Encouraging individuals, households and communities to live well and thrive*
 - *Improved accessibility to services and opportunities*
- 2.3 *Copeland Local Committee has adopted the key theme proposed by the Children and Young People's Partnership which is:*
- *Improving outcomes for Young People*
- 2.4 *The work of the local committee contributes to the achievement of the Council Plan 2018-2022 vision which is to be*
- *A Council that works with residents, businesses and communities and other organisations to deliver the best services possible within the available resources.*

2.5 ***The outcomes of this vision are:***

- ***People in Cumbria are healthy and safe***
- ***Places in Cumbria are well-connected and thriving***
- ***The economy in Cumbria is growing and benefits everyone***

2.6 ***There are no negative equality implications arising out of the recommendations of this report.***

3.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 ***Members note the contents of the report.***

4.0 **BACKGROUND**

Community Development Team Update

4.1 **Egremont Borderlands** - 4 Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) were submitted for consideration for the Borderlands fund. The PIDs were reviewed by an external consultant and dialogue is ongoing with Project Leads. A meeting of the Town Team has been arranged to discuss the advice of the consultants.

4.2 The Borderlands programme will move across to the new Cumberland Council. The next steps will be for the consultants' recommendations to be presented for approval to submit to the Borderlands Partnership Board and to facilitate the process for schemes to move to the next stage of developing project level business cases.

4.3 **Social Media update** –Throughout December and January the team posted 103 posts to the Copeland Community Development Facebook page reaching over 9,000 people. The most popular posts included advertising mental health and food and financial support available over the Christmas period, school admissions information and warm spot locations.

4.4 **West Cumbria Cost of Living and Better Health Expo events** – were held at Millom Guide Hall, 28 February 2023, and Cleator Moor Civic Hall, 8 March 2023. The focus of the West Cumbria Cost of Living and Better Health Expo events was to help to better inform professionals and the public around the wide range of support and advice that is currently available in our area in relation to cost of living and health related matters

Library Update

4.5 Libraries across Copeland continue to look to extend its existing range of free activities offered within them, to appeal to a range of ages and interests. This includes regular sessions and special events.

- 4.6 New to Whitehaven Library is a weekly Story Tots session for pre-school children (Thursdays, 10am) and a Cuppa and Chat group, hosted by a Cumbria County Council Health and Wellbeing Officer (Mondays 11am), followed by a walk.
- 4.7 Millom Library now offers a monthly Photography Group (last Tuesday of the month, 10.30am), and will soon be starting a weekly social/ chat group.
- 4.8 With assistance from Copeland Local Committee, staff are soon to launch regular gaming sessions, initially in Whitehaven Library. These will range from traditional board games to interactive digital technology. Gaming now accounts for a significant proportion of the UK entertainment industry and as part of the cultural landscape are a natural part of the library community offer. The new sessions will offer social connections and enjoyment, as well as skills building, and free access to interactive resources that can be expensive, therefore making them accessible to those who would not be able to afford them.
- 4.9 Following from the pilot programme the library outreach team ran at The Gables (reported to Local Committee in October 2022), VR headset sessions will soon be offered to service users of Hensingham Day Centre. These will be dedicated sessions delivered in the Library followed by a tour of the library,
- 4.10 The outreach team in particular look to organise one-off events in libraries. During February half term they organised a Costume Swap in Whitehaven Library to help families with rising costs and to be kinder to the environment by recycling costumes ready for World Book Day.
- 4.11 The outreach team are also working with Little Inventors to provide an offer for local schools to visit Millom Library for some STEM related creator sessions along a literacy theme, tying in with British Science Week.
- 4.12 As a backdrop to welcoming local residents into our libraries, during the winter of 2022 all libraries registered as Warm Spots with the County Council, ensuring people needing access to premises for warmth could be signposted to these community buildings. Unfortunately, recurring building problems left Frizington Library with no heating during December and Whitehaven Library for significant periods from December to early February.
- 4.13 At the core of every library service are the resources available for customers to use. Staff continue to work on a project to stock check book items held on shelves. Eradicating errors and identifying that a proportion of items remain on loan or lost after lockdown enables the service to improve its catalogue of holdings. Now Cumbria Libraries offers a free request service, there is increased demand from customers to be able to ask for items to be transferred between locations to meet their reading needs and this work assists with the quality of this service.
- 4.14 The local library team also look to develop new elements of our stock offer. They are currently updating the Autism book collection and will extend this to include new Autism Resource loan bags. Tactile resources have proven popular in the in-library sensory sessions, currently offered weekly in Millom

Library and to restart on a regular basis soon in Whitehaven Library. It is hoped these elements of the autism offer will be available for World Autism Acceptance Week (27 March - 2 April 2023).

Public Health Update

- 4.15 Public Health and communities have worked with Copeland local committee since February 2016 following the appointment of the Public Health Locality Manager for Copeland in December 2015.
- 4.16 Awareness, understanding, knowledge and relevance of public health in communities has grown and become an integral part of local committee, woven into thinking, planning and decision making.
- 4.17 Members approach has created a legacy which will carry forward into the new Cumberland Council which appreciates that Public Health in communities is fundamental to health and wellbeing and creating and sustaining thriving communities.
- 4.18 Copeland Health and Wellbeing Forum formed in 2016 and agreed its priorities as healthy weight, alcohol awareness, mental health, older people, ageing well, addressing health inequalities and the nuclear new build health impact assessment aligning with the vision from council's Health & Wellbeing Strategy that everyone in Cumbria will have improved health and wellbeing and inequalities in health and wellbeing across the county will be reduced
- 4.19 Public Health priorities for Copeland were reducing alcohol misuse, reducing childhood obesity, and reducing smoking.
- 4.20 Since that time there have been 30 meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Forum which raised awareness of public health priorities, the wider, social determinates of health and health inequalities. Projects were championed and supported including Phunky Foods, Curriculum based Healthy Lifestyles programme targeting childhood obesity, the Copeland Hoarding Project, and the Copeland Alcohol Project.
- 4.21 Most interventions take time to show outcomes. In the case of the Phunky Foods programme, it was initially funded by public health and Copeland Local committee, then Copeland Local Committee and Sellafield so this programme has continued for more than 5 years. This means that it is possible to compare the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) data which weighs and measures children when they start primary school and again when they leave.
- 4.22 Data from 2016/17 shows that 27.6% of reception age children in Copeland were overweight/obese and 41.7% of YR6 children. 2021/22 data shows 27.4% of reception age children in Copeland were overweight/obese and 40% of YR6 children. Whilst this is only a small improvement and cannot be attributed solely to the schools' programme, it must be considered in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic, schools being closed and then having significant restrictions as well as the wider impacts on children, families, and the community.

- 4.23 Smoking rates have fallen but there are still more than 17%, equating to around 12,000 adults in Copeland smoking. They are at significant risk of premature mortality from the three main causes of smoking – lung cancer, COPD and cardiovascular disease.
- 4.24 The use of e-cigarettes/vaping has grown, and Public Health recognises that vaping poses less risks to health than smoking tobacco-based products. Vaping, when adults use it as a quitting aid, is showing good success rates but it is not recommended for any other purpose. Advice is if you don't smoke, don't start vaping and do not buy or provide vaping devices etc for a child (under 18) as it is illegal to do so.
- 4.25 The Nuclear New Build did not progress but there are significant developments and major infrastructure projects in the pipeline meaning the experience of carrying out a thoroughly comprehensive Health Impact/Health Needs assessment including community engagement, serves as an example of both good practice and learning going forward.
- 4.26 There remains a lack of access to NHS dental provision in Copeland. This worsened when at the end of 2016, the Cleator Moor service closed and there was a short fall in dental places allocated to accommodate patients in practices in West Cumbria.
- 4.27 Since that time work has continued with partners and stakeholders to initially find someone to take up the Cleator Moor opportunity and then to find an alternative solution. Plans are now in place working in partnership with NHS England and UCLAN National Centre for Remote and Rural Medicine, West Lake Campus. It is envisaged that there will be provision in place later in 2023.
- 4.28 COVID-19 changed lives. Not only for Public Health but for all aspects of everyday life. Its legacy continues and combined with the cost of living crisis, the gap in the health inequalities has grown and is now one of the focuses for public health going forward.
- 4.29 The work in Copeland to date gives both experience and understanding plus a depth of knowledge that provides great foundations to continue working to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

Adult Learning Update

- 4.30 Copeland Adult Learning's recruitment to Term 2 provision has gone well. This academic year has seen 290 learners enrol onto skills provision which includes GCSE and Functional Skills English and Maths, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Essential Digital Skills and Volunteering courses. In addition, 598 have enrolled onto non-accredited digital, languages, arts and craft and health and wellbeing workshops and courses.
- 4.31 Courses enable learners to acquire new skills and prepare for training, employment, self-employment.

- 4.32 The majority of learners live in the Copeland area and access learning on face to face courses. A small minority that live elsewhere in the County access courses online.
- 4.33 Planning for term 3, April until July is now complete. This will be released on CCC Adult Learning website 23 April 2023. There is an extensive range of accredited provision, including English, Maths and Digital which forms part of the local and national priorities.
- 4.34 A priority for our new term is the Art for Wellbeing curriculum. Working with a number of partner organisations and ESOL residents of Copeland to build confidence and self-esteem, avoid social isolation and encourage participants to engage in their local community.
- 4.35 Collaborative ways of working between Adult Learning and the NHS continue to be successful. The NHS signpost clients to 'Healthy Living' and 'Cooking on a Budget' courses. These courses are designed to offer learners a hands on experience in preparing and creating healthy dishes at low cost and include information and demonstrations on nutrition.
- 4.36 The English Café in Whitehaven Library continues its success. Adult Learning visit weekly to meet participants and discuss courses that are available to them.
- 4.37 Currently there are a number of new learners enrolling on to courses where English is their second language. These are not solely ESOL courses but also to English, digital skills courses, maths and art courses.
- 4.38 Adult Learning provision is focused on enabling inclusive and accessible learning opportunities delivered within local communities and through online learning platforms. This continues to be one of the values during the planning provision for the next academic year, from January to April. Adult Learning is committed to ensuring a wide ranging and varied offer meets the needs of the residents of Copeland.

Active Cumbria Update

- 4.39 Together Fund Award - The Together Fund closes 31 March 2023, with the deadline for applications the second week in March. There is a limited amount of funding unallocated. The recent grants awarded are:
- Groundwork North East and Cumbria - £6,800 to enable activity sessions to take place, to engage and improve physical and mental health for people seeking asylum residing in the Waverly Hotel in Whitehaven.
 - Age UK West Cumbria – £6,210 to support people aged 65+ who have comorbidity or a level of frailty that places them in limbo between hospital discharge and regaining fuller independence in their homes. Funding will provide transitional support in the home to aid independent recovery post discharge from hospital. (This project has also been funded for an additional 6 months through the reconditioning fund – See below).

4.40 **Live, Longer, Better in Cumbria** – The Re-conditioning Fund has supported the Age UK Together Fund project for an additional 6 months meaning it will be a year long project to look at helping the organisation secure longer term investment to continue the service beyond the initial year delivery.

4.41 **Street Tag** - At the beginning of 2022 Active Cumbria launched a county wide Street Tag programme, which had three aims:

- Incentivise school communities to be more physically active and boost mental wellbeing
- Enable children, young people, and families to develop a positive relationship with movement
- Support schools and parents to adopt active travel approaches as the preferred mode of transport for children to get to and from school

4.42 Year one of the programme has finished and Active Cumbria are able to provide a review of the impact the programme has had in the first 12 months at Appendix 1.

4.43 Active Cumbria will continue to build on the success of Street Tag. The financial contribution that came from all six local committees to the support the programme has ensured the success outlined in the report

Copeland-Wide

4.44 **Cost-of-Living Reserve** - The allocation of funds to Copeland was £45,700 comprising of £18,400 for community support and £27,300 for food to help with the challenges some families are facing with the cost-of-living increases.

4.45 The team worked with partner organisations to distribute the funding this included:

- Financial support to food pantries to purchase additional food and essential items
- Financial support to verified warm spot venues to provide food and refreshments
- Funding to third sector and community organisations for the purchase of vouchers to enable them to support those in financial crisis
- Purchase of items such as hot water bottles and blankets to be distributed via partner organisations.

4.46 **NDA Cost of Living fund** – The team have been allocated funding from NDA to provide support with the cost-of living crisis. The team have been working with partner organisations on the following grant funding streams:

- Financial support to food pantries to purchase additional food and essential items
- Financial support to verified warm spot venues for refreshment and utilities
- Direct financial support to individual households for utilities, food and essential household items
- Financial support to organisations to purchase energy saving items to distribute to their customers
- Financial support to organisations to purchase and allocate vouchers to support customers

- 4.47 **Copeland Citizens Advice** – have produced their money advice report for the period April 22 - March 23. They report that the cost of living and fuel crisis is now seeing a wider group of people accessing support. This includes an increase in the number of people helped for the first time with crisis support such as food banks and emergency charitable support.
- 4.48 At the end of December 2023 more people were unable to afford to top up their prepayment meter than for the entirety of the previous 10 years combined.
- 4.49 Energy continues to be the top debt issue for Copeland residents, people applying for or appealing PIP decisions is the biggest benefit enquiry area and people seeking support to access accommodation is the biggest housing issue.
- 4.50 Money Advice data April 2022 - January 2023 illustrates that 347 clients were supported, 1,895 issues were dealt with including debt, benefits, housing and employment, 62% of clients were female and 37% male. 59% of clients had a long term health condition and 15% were disabled. 866 debts were dealt with, income gains of £308,720 were secured and £436,018 worth of debt was written off. £38,292 of repayments were rescheduled, £90,362 of debts were repaid, and clients better able to manage debts totalled £307,985.
- 4.51 **Cumbria County Council's Refugee Resettlement Team** - continue to hold weekly drop-in sessions for refugees who arrived on either the UKRS, ARAP, ACRS programmes or who arrived on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, to offer support and assistance. It is also an opportunity for refugees to meet caseworkers and other refugees in Copeland.
- 4.52 The first drop-in was held 8 February 2023 at the United Reformed Church in Whitehaven and every Wednesday thereafter.

5.0 OPTIONS

5.1 The report is to note only so there are no options to consider

6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 This report sets out the activities that are progressing across Copeland across all themes and size of project. Working with partners is a key part of community development activity.

Simon Higgins
Assistant Director – Customer and Community Services
March 2023

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Street Tag stats

Electoral Division(s): All

Executive Decision

| | |
|--|----|
| | No |
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Key Decision

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| | No* |
|--|-----|

If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan?

| | | |
|--|--|------|
| | | N/A* |
|--|--|------|

Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency?

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|--|-----|
| | No* |
|--|-----|

If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained?

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|--|--|------|
| | | N/A* |
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Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny?
If so, give details below.

| | |
|--|-----|
| | No* |
|--|-----|

Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken?

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|--|--|------|
| | | N/A* |
|--|--|------|

Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken?

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| | | N/A* |
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N.B. If an executive decision is made, then a decision cannot be implemented until the expiry of the eighth working day after the date of the meeting – unless the decision is urgent and exempt from call-in and necessary approvals have been obtained.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS
[including Local Committees]

No previous relevant decisions.

CONSIDERATION BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Not considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers.

REPORT AUTHOR

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