



Agenda

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 28 February 2024 at 10.30 am
Flensburg Room - Civic Centre, Carlisle

The press and public are welcome to attend for the consideration of any items which are public.

Enquiries and requests for supporting papers to: Jacqueline Issatt
Email: Jacqueline.Issatt@cumberland.gov.uk

Membership

Cllr A Markley
Cllr H Tucker
Cllr M Eldon
Cllr J Forster
Cllr J Ghayouba
Cllr L Jones-Bulman
Cllr C McCarron-Holmes
Cllr C Wills

Substitutes:

Cllr M Johnson
Cllr R Dobson
Cllr J Mallinson
Cllr T Allison
Cllr M Mitchelson
Cllr D Moore
Cllr T Pickstone
Cllr A Pratt
Cllr B Wernham
Cllr G Mitchell
Cllr G Minshaw
Cllr A Glendinning
Cllr J Gisdale
Cllr A Harid
Cllr M Harris
Cllr M Hawkins
Cllr L Patrick
Cllr B Pegram
Cllr S Pollen
Cllr A Semple
Cllr G Troughton
Cllr C Weber
Cllr J Whalen

Access to Information

Agenda and Reports

Copies of the agenda and Part A reports are available for members of the public to inspect prior to the meeting. Copies will also be available at the meeting.

The agenda and Part A reports are also available on the [Cumberland Council website](#).

PART A - ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interest

To receive declarations by Members and / or Co-Optees of disclosable pecuniary interest, interests, other registerable interest and any other interests in respect of items on the agenda.

3. Exclusion of Press & Public

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items of business on the agenda.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 10)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2024.

5. iSH Enterprise Campus Development (Pages 11 - 22)

The Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport to submit a report which provides an overview and update in relation to the Leconfield Regeneration Project.
(Copy report enclosed)

6. Community Power (Pages 23 - 92)

The Director of Public Health and Communities to submit a report on the forms of community power, options for its future development and the role of elected members in shaping the organisation's approach of working with communities.
(Copy Report enclosed)

7. Scrutiny Overview Report and Draft Workplan (Pages 93 - 100)

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submit a report which provides an overview of matters related to the committee's work.
(Copy report enclosed)

PART B - ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

-NIL-



Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 3 January 2024

Time: 10.30 am

Location: Conference Room B - Cumbria House

Present: Cllr A Markley (Chair), Cllr H Tucker (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Eldon, Cllr J Forster, Cllr L Jones-Bulman and Cllr C Wills

Also Present: Councillor L Brown – Governance and Thriving Communities Portfolio Holder

In Attendance Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Regeneration Manager
Nuclear Advisor
Stakeholder Relationship Manager, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

PLOS.32/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Ghayouba and Councillor C McCarron-Holmes.

PLOS.33/23 Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were submitted.

PLOS.34/23 Exclusion of Press & Public

RESOLVED – It was agreed that the items in Part A be dealt with in public and the items in private be dealt with when the public and press are excluded.

PLOS.35/23 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Regarding minute excerpt PLOS.29/23 Overview of Major Cumberland Place Projects, a Member commented that section covering the closure of the facility at weekends did not make clear that the facility was in Cleator Moor, he requested that the minute be amended. The Democratic Services Officer undertook to do so.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the inclusion of the amendment above, that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2023 be approved.

PLOS.36/23 Relationship between the Council and Nuclear Sector in Cumberland

The Nuclear Issues Advisor submitted a report that considered the evolving relationship between the nuclear sector and local government in Cumberland. The Sellafield site was in a long term decommissioning process at the beginning of which created expectations of decreased employment opportunities, however, the number of jobs at the site was showing an increased employment trend which would rise further as new developments at the site and in the industry came online.

As well as the recent reorganisation of local government in the Cumberland area a new leadership team was in place at Sellafield, both Cumberland Council and Sellafield enjoyed very

good relationship with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The first 'Tier 1' comprising the Leaders and Chief Executives of Cumberland Council and Sellafield had taken place and had focussed on inclusive recruitment and how to maximise the retention of economic benefits in Cumberland.

Discussion arose on the issue of education during which the following observations / questions were raised:

Members spoke of the importance of engaging with those in education at the earliest opportunity; the need for a co-ordinated approach to working with schools / colleges / universities; expanding work with schools more widely through the Cumberland area; and retraining and upskilling adults; training and education to support both the nuclear industry and the supply chain industries associated with it.

The Nuclear Issues Advisor noted that there had been a shift in the focus of recruitment to skills rather than qualifications. The new Chief Executive of Sellafield was proactively supporting the inclusive recruitment.

The Stakeholder Relationship Manager provided a number of examples of existing programmes to engage with education establishments within the Cumberland Council area including: the Well Programme being delivered in west Cumbrian schools and the Young Generation Network, a programme of engagement for sixth forms which gave information on entering the nuclear industry and why it was aspirational to work in the industry.

A Member inquired about the mechanisms in place to retain skilled people in the workforce and sought assurance that those seeking employment at Sellafield would have long employment futures.

The Nuclear Issues Advisor responded that a key focus of the economic strategy was retention. The Council had a role to play in highlighting what was on offer in the area as well as advocating for improved transport connectivity within its area.

There were currently eleven and a half thousand persons employed directly at Sellafield and many others in the supply chain. In the coming years there was both construction and decommissioning work which meant that the level of employment was not likely to change. Going forward it was possible that the overall employee requirement may reduce, but given the decommissioning work, the construction of stores and the development of modular reactors which would require sites to be constructed to house them, the extent of any reductions was not known.

A Member considered there was a need for regional strategic planning to support the education and training needs of the industry.

The Nuclear Issues Advisor responded noting that the adjacent Westmorland and Furness Council also had issues relating to workforce skills requirements in relation to the submarine construction industry in Barrow and that the Chief Executives of both Councils had spoken on the matter.

The Chair thanked the Nuclear Issues Advisor and the Stakeholder Relationship Manager for the report and their responses to the Committees questions and discussion. As the largest employer in its area it was important that the Council maintained an effective working relationship with Sellafield.

RESOLVED – That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Had reviewed the content of the report;
- 2) Supported the Council in engaging proactively and collaboratively with the nuclear sector to deliver the optimum economic and wellbeing benefits for the community;
- 3) Supported the Council and nuclear sector in projecting a strong case to Government and other stakeholders that we are a forward looking community which positively embraced the opportunities that the nuclear sector (and other clean energy sectors) could bring to the community and the UK.
- 4) Supported the Council to work with the nuclear sector while developing its Economic Strategy, with a particular focus on attracting and retaining the skills and resources needed to gain optimum benefits from emerging opportunities.

PLOS.37/23 Economic Development - Strategic Issues and Opportunities overview

The Regeneration Manager submitted a report which provided an overview the proposed approach to be used in the development of an Economic Strategy for Cumberland; the socio-economic profile of the Council area along with the arrangements for the Cumberland Economic Summit.

The Governance and Thriving Communities Portfolio Holder commented that health and wellbeing were at the heart of the Council's activities and that the Economic Strategy would support that. Moreover, it was important that the Council recognised its role and importance in contributing to the strategy as it was a large employer. She further advised that working in a crosscutting way with themes and considering the social value aspect of the strategy were areas she was discussing with officers.

In considering the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

A Member commented that housing provision was an important factor in economic growth as it was often allied with new business generation. He noted the creation of the new St Cuthbert's Garden Village in the Carlisle area and asked if there were any known plans for other garden villages within the Council area?

The Regeneration Manager was not aware of any such plans, the methods of delivering new housing may arise as part of the development of the Cumberland Local Plan.

The Committee discussed the importance of effective transport links to support people in accessing work and contributing to the economic growth of the area. Transport links were particularly important for those in rural areas, and the services needed to be both financially viable and sustainable over the long term.

The Chair asked whether it was known if a new link to the railway was anticipated funded by savings from the amended HS2 project?

The Regeneration Manager responded that he was aware that some reprofiling of HS2 funding across the area was being undertaken and that further details were anticipated.

The Chair indicated that it was an area the Committee may wish to investigate in the future. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer undertook to arrange for some information on the issue to be provided.

The Chair indicated that it was an area the Committee may wish to investigate in the future. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer undertook to carry out some research on the issue.

A Member considered that retention of people in the council area was an important factor in supporting economic growth.

The Governance and Thriving Communities Portfolio Holder agreed and advised that the Strategy would be wider than the economy of jobs and would work with people on what they needed. The Council's Community Panel had generated databases of information about their respective areas and that information was able to be used by officers. The Neighbourhood Investment Plans that were currently being created would develop over time.

The Regeneration Manager added that the Regeneration team were already working closely with the Community Development Team which supported the Community Panels particularly in relation to the Borderlands Place Programme work.

The Chair thanked the Committee for its discussion and noted the importance of continuing to work to develop an Economic Strategy.

RESOLVED – That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and provided feedback on:

- 1) The proposed approach to the development of an Economic Strategy for Cumberland;
- 2) The socio-economic profiles and challenges for Cumberland, as set out in Section 2 of the report which formed the context for the Economic Strategy;
- 3) The arrangements for the Cumberland Economic Summit, as set out in Section 3 of the report, that would inform the development of the Strategy;
- 4) That the Policy and Scrutiny Officer arrange for some information on the reprofiling of HS2 funding within the Council area to be provided to the committee.

PLOS.38/23 Committee Update Report and Work Programme

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer submitted the Committee Update Report and Work Programme. Members' attention was drawn to the 'Progress on previous resolutions' section report. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that in relation to the Committee's resolution at its 6 September 2023 meeting to recommend to the Executive that budget be found for the creation of a new Empty Homes Officer role, a report had not yet been submitted as work was being carried out to develop service structures. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer suggested that the item be closed on the Committee's report and that she would continue to monitor the progress of the matter through the Executive. The Committee indicated its agreement.

Regarding the Work Programme and the Committee's meeting on 28 February 2024, the Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Waste – implications of government policy and the Environment Agency partner update would be submitted as for information items.

RESOLVED – 1) That the items on the most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

2) That the progress on resolutions from previous meetings be noted.

3) That the draft Work Programme 2023/24 be noted.

The meeting finished at 11.54 am

This page is intentionally left blank



Report to Place Scrutiny Panel

Meeting Date – 28 February 2024

Key Decision – No

Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Leader’s Portfolio

Directorate – Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport

Report Author – Andrew Sproat, Programme Manager

Title – iSH Enterprise Campus Development

Brief Summary:

This report provides an overview and update in relation to the Leconfield Regeneration Project.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the committee note the contents of the report.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. Background

- 1.1. The Leconfield Industrial Estate was acquired in January 2020 by the former Copeland Borough Council to help deliver the Industrial Solutions Hub (iSH) mission, and to support the development of an Enterprise Campus at Cleator Moor (iEC).
- 1.2. There are two funded phases to iEC being:
 - Phase I 'Enterprising Town' (ET) which delivers the construction of a Central Hub building.
 - Phase II 'Levelling Up Fund' (LUF) which delivers the construction of new light industrial/R&D units, the 'Town Spine' (an active travel walking and cycle route connecting the site to adjacent communities), the installation of ducting for digital fibre roll out to the site, and the creation of a temporary 'Meanwhile Hub.'
- 1.3. The iEC involves funding support from the Government's Towns Fund (£7.5m) and Levelling Up Fund (£20m), alongside support from Sellafield (£3.6m), the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency (£7m), a minimum of 5 years ringfenced revenue income from the site and up to £8m Cumberland Council facilitated by Public Works Loan Board borrowing (the borrowing cost to be met from rental income from the Leconfield site).
- 1.4. The Industrial Solutions Hub (iSH) is a company wholly owned by Cumberland Council, with the objective of creating a diverse and sustainable economy for West Cumbria, by providing a new, more outward-looking and export-oriented economic model for the region. The current model has evolved from decades of regional reliance on one major employer, and customer for the region's businesses, but it is not fit for purpose in the long term.
- 1.5. The iSH objective is to create a 'West Cumbria Advantage' to incentivise supply chain organisations to locate, grow, export and diversify from the region, with a particular focus on creating an ecosystem that becomes renowned for solving engineering and industrial challenges, through its effective business collaboration.
- 1.6. The intervention strategy is a combination of 'cluster-building' activities to deliver a competitive advantage to regionally located firms (existing and new) and a dramatic increase in commercialisation of experience and capability on the Sellafield site, triggered by the Sellafield Ltd strategy to increase its engagement of the supply chain.

- 1.7. iSH is currently engaging with the business community, partners and potential tenants for the hub building to finalise the hub operating model, iSH Business Plan and revenue funding requirements. The Council will also commission a project gateway review as part of the ongoing due diligence process prior to key investment decisions.
- 1.8. DLUHC Town deal funding must be spent by March 2026 with the following outputs to be delivered:
 - 78 Temporary FT jobs supported
 - 130 Full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent jobs created through the project
 - 2,490sqm increased floorspace for skills development and employability and shared workspace supporting innovation and entrepreneurship
 - 1,970sqm refurbished commercial floorspace

2. Project Outline and Update

Phase I Cleator Moor Town Deal - Enterprising Town

- 2.1. The Phase 1 Enterprising Town (ET) project is part of the wider Government funded Cleator Moor Town Deal and focuses upon the construction of a central hub building providing 2,490sqm workspace incorporating three wings providing flexible workshops/innovation spaces together with informal meeting/collaboration areas, dedicated offices and classrooms alongside bookable meeting rooms.
- 2.2. The hub will act as a catalyst to support the remaining redevelopment of the site, attracting to the site a range of tenants from small, medium and large-scale enterprises who operate on a local, national and international level. iSH, will take a lease of the hub at a commercial rent with an associated management agreement with the Council.
- 2.3. The Hub building has completed RIBA 4 technical design stage and work is ongoing to finalise a construction contract sum with the procured contractor Morgan Sindall (procured via the Procure North West Regional Framework). Subject to conclusion of the tender process and council approval of a refreshed business case, it is expected that construction of the hub will commence October 2024 with completion autumn 2025.

- 2.4. Enabling work to relocate BOC from Plot 11 (the site on which the new hub building is to be constructed) in advance of the hub construction commencing is required. BOC have agreed, in principle, to relocate to an alternative site at Discovery Park Lillyhall near Workington. Process to secure relevant planning and building control approval, agree costs and contracts for the relocation is underway with external legal advisors Gelards acting for the Council.
- 2.5. Some refurbishment of existing smaller units within the site (units 15A-H and 20A-B) has also been undertaken and is continuing.

Phase II ‘Levelling Up Fund’ (LUF)

- 2.6. Phase 2 of the iEC development is funded from the Government’s Levelling Up Fund to the sum of £20m, with a spend deadline of Q4 2026 for the construction of:
- Light industrial/R&D workspace aimed toward start-up businesses. 20 units will be available on easy-in/easy-out flexible terms or longer term lets to meet individual requirements. It is proposed that each unit will measure circa 137sqm NIA (Ground floor 109sqm & Mezzanine 28sqm).
 - Grow on space workspace units. 6 units will each measure circa 634sqm NIA (Ground Floor 481sqm & Mezzanine 153sqm). The space can be divided into varying sized units and made available on flexible terms to meet individual requirements. RIBA 2 design proposals have been completed and outline planning application prepared for the workspace units.
 - An active travel walking and cycling route “town spine” connecting the site to the Cycle path, adjacent communities and Cleator Moor town centre.
 - Installation of ducting and fibre infrastructure to the Leconfield site. ICT Specialists AH Connections have prepared an initial feasibility study for this element of the project to deliver improved bandwidth/connectivity to current and new tenants.
 - Refurbishment of redundant industrial unit to form a temporary ‘Meanwhile Hub’ providing a base for iSH during construction of the main hub building.

2.7. Outputs to be delivered include:

- FTE permanent jobs created directly or indirectly through the projects – 181
- Total length of new cycleways 1.5Km
- New parking spaces -102
- Amount of rehabilitated land – 30,000sqm
- Number of sites cleared -1
- Additional commercial units with broadband access of at least 1Gbps – 26
- New industrial floorspace created – 5,139 sqm
- New office floorspace space created – 1278 sqm
- New trees planted – 100
- Existing industrial floorspace improved – 232sqm
- Alternative fuel (EV) charging points installed – 10

2.8. Contractor Morgan Sindall has been engaged through the Scape procurement framework to provide an initial viability assessment (by 16 February 2024) for delivery of the above projects. Subject to Council approval and progression into the next phase of design development, construction of the industrial units is expected to commence February 2025 with completion January 2026.

3. Alternative options considered

3.1. Not applicable

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1. The iEC regeneration scheme at Leconfield is designed to deliver the iSH mission and is the start of a 15 year regeneration project designed to house the nucleus of a business cluster which will produce significant positive regeneration outputs for West Cumbria and Cleator Moor in particular.

4.2. Phase 1 Enterprising Town RIBA 4 technical design and cost for the Hub building is currently being agreed. Contract award will require Executive approval. This will require the finalisation of the financial business case for the project supported by the iSH business plan.

4.3. Phase 2 Levelling Up Fund proposals are currently at RIBA 2 outline design stage with a procurement process underway through the Scape framework to progress the design and construction.

4.4. The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note this report.

Implications:

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities - The delivery of the project contributes to Council plan priorities in particular “Local economies that work for local people.”

Relevant Risks and explain how risks can be mitigated - The risks associated with this project are being closely monitored and mitigated through the Programme Management Office and the Council’s Governance arrangements.

Consultation / Engagement - Consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken prior to Town Deal and LUF bid submission. Ongoing stakeholder engagement is delivered through the Council’s Head of Town’s Fund and coordinated with iSH. Tenant liaison sessions are also held.

Legal – Legal support to the project is provided by both internal and external legal advisors including Womble Bond Dickinson and Geldards.

Finance – The iEC regeneration scheme is funded through two separate Government funding schemes with match funding secured from strategic partners. Funding is included within the agreed capital programme.

Information Governance – N/A

Impact Assessments – Not required. Report for information only.

Lead Officer Contact details:

Name: Andrew Sproat
Email: Andrew.sproat@cumberland.gov.uk
Phone Number: 07836 585 161

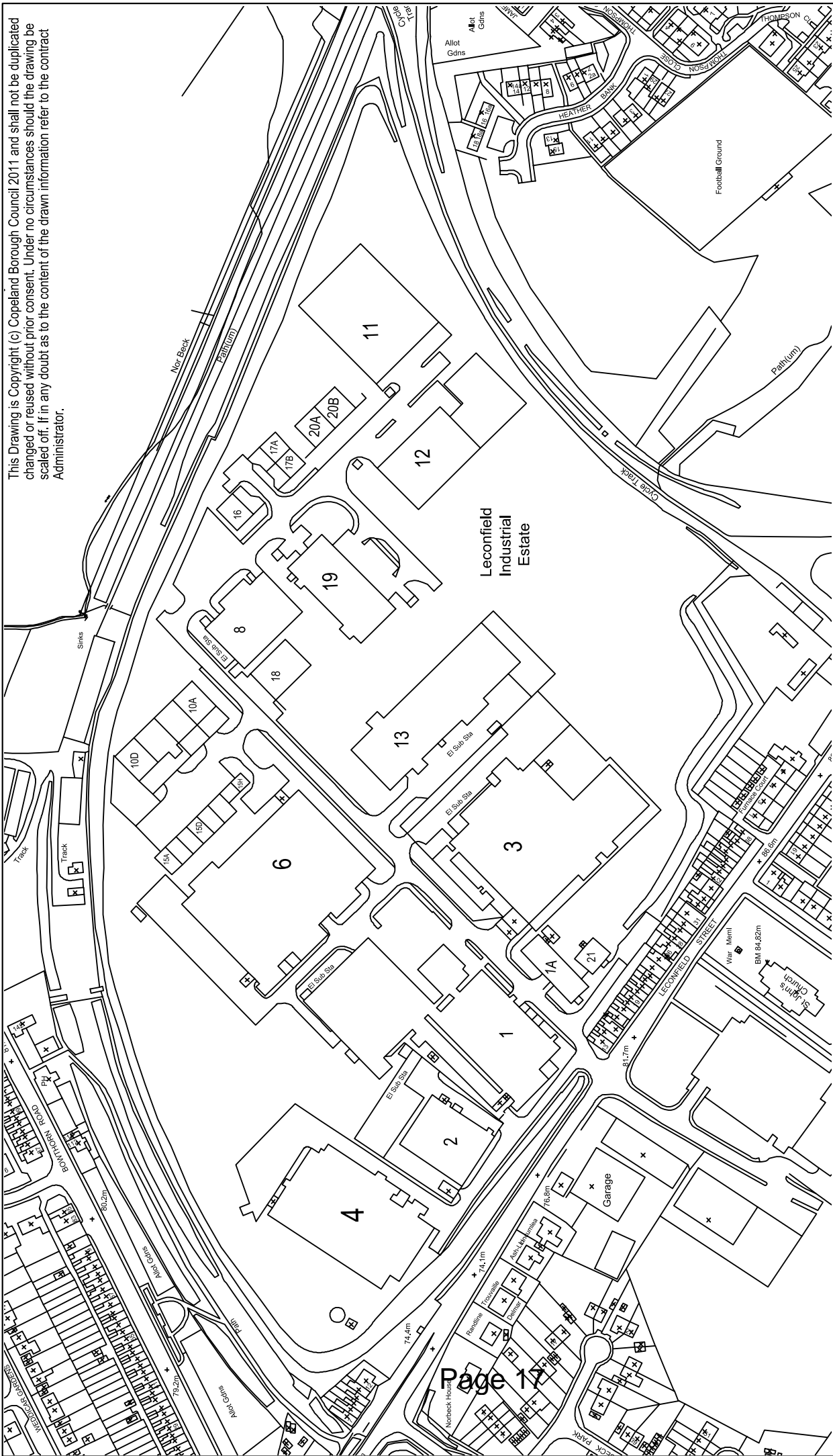
Background papers:

None

Appendices attached to report:

- Leconfield Industrial Estate Site Plan
- Indicative Images of Hub Building and Light Industrial Units

This Drawing is Copyright (c) Copeland Borough Council 2011 and shall not be duplicated changed or reused without prior consent. Under no circumstances should the drawing be scaled off. If in any doubt as to the content of the drawn information refer to the contract Administrator.



Leconfield Industrial Estate (1:3500)

Scale @ A4 1:3500	Designed by N/A	Drawn by JW	Checked by BV	Revision REV: 1	Date 26/01/2021
----------------------	--------------------	----------------	------------------	--------------------	--------------------

Property / Project Title Leconfield Industrial Estate	Project No. LIE - JW
Drawing Title Cleator Moor	Drawing No. LIE - JW - 001

Contracts and Property Dept.
The Copeland Centre, Catherine Street,
Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7SJ









This page is intentionally left blank



Report to Place Scrutiny

Meeting Date – 28 February 2024

Key Decision – Yes/ No

Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Cllr Lisa Brown

Directorate – Public Health and Communities

Report Author – Paul Musgrave, Assistant Director, Communities and Localities

Title – Community Power

Brief Summary:

This report describes the spectrum of community empowerment and community power from basic community engagement through to collaboration, participative democracy, co-production and devolvement of powers.

It sets out the journey that Cumberland Council is currently on and explores options and potential ambitions for the future and examines the role of elected members in shaping our approaches across the organisation to new ways of working with communities.

Recommendations:

- 1 That members note the report.
- 2 That members give their views on the principles of engagement as set out in the draft Community Engagement Framework at appendix 1 and referred to in para 2.1
- 3 That members give their views on the developments of Community Panels and Networks as referred to in para 2.2
- 4 That members discuss the potential of their role in future direction of the council's community power/journey.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

Background

Community power and community empowerment are often used interchangeably and indeed have broadly similar definitions. Essentially both terms refer to the concept of communities/people having a greater say over the places in which they live and the services they use. It is a growing movement with communities across the country, and globally, working together to improve places, public services and each other's lives. Communities with greater power have the potential to answer some of the most persistent challenges in our society today.

For the purposes of this report the term "community power" will be used more frequently. It can often be interpreted that community empowerment is still a set of actions that the Council wishes to do "to" communities whereas community power is a concept we aspire to share "with" communities. However, empowerment is an important element of the journey in itself and will be referred to.

Community power is based on the principle that people have insight, lived experience and capabilities which should play a meaningful role in the big decisions taken by central government, local government and the wider public sector. Recognising this has big consequences for how decisions are made, both for communities of place, based around a geographic area, and for communities of experience based around shared conditions, demographic characteristics or life stages.

Current systems can often lead to the assets and social capital of communities being bypassed by formal organisations. If decision-making was opened up or was closer to the community, allowing for the parity of community expertise alongside that of professionals, then better and more sustainable outcomes could be achieved. No one knows a community better than that community itself.

Community power and community led approaches argue that communities should have much more involvement in the design and delivery of public services. In practice, this means much wider community involvement in decision-making and the day-to-day delivery of services and, maybe most importantly, a big shift in the culture of public service workforces away from a paternalistic mind-set to one that respects and collaborates with communities as equal partners.

1. Considerations for Community Power in the context of Cumberland Council

There is a strong rationale as to why community power should be examined as an overarching principle for Council business and an ambition for our communities.

1.1 Our approach is shifting towards a prevention focus:

Putting Health and Wellbeing at the heart of everything we do in Cumberland gives our system great potential to break out of the cycle of treating symptoms and be more able to address root causes to stop problems occurring in the first place or deteriorating if they emerge. Genuine prevention relies on people actively participating in their own health and wellbeing. This links in well with our "Pre Front Door" Front Door approach and the transformation programmes about to commence which includes a specific workstream focused on Community Power

1.2 The challenges we face require active, resilient communities

The depth and complexity of many modern problems from climate change to deindustrialisation or social isolation are beyond the ability of any single institution to resolve. We need an approach that recognises how Cumberland Council can ensure communities are not merely passive recipients of services or transactional customers and one which recognises their role at the heart of sustainable solutions.

1.3 Communities have a basic right to have a say over the system that exists to support them:

No one knows a community better than that community itself. Creating new and more varied ways for communities to engage with decisions affecting their lives is an important part of the co-production journey. As a new Unitary Authority we have a unique opportunity to reset the ways we want to engage with, and empower our communities using innovation and technology alongside some of our effective traditional methods and taking the conversation to the community rather than expecting communities to come to us.

1.4 Harnessing the benefits of Community Power

- Community power has potential to improve individual health and wellbeing. From peer-support groups, through lived experience to innovative community-led approaches, practitioners are recognising the benefits that active participants bring to improvement of their health and wellbeing.
- Community power can strengthen community wellbeing and resilience. Involving people in decision-making, alongside supporting them with resources and wider social infrastructure, can enable community action to improve wellbeing and resilience locally.
- Community power can enhance democratic participation and boost trust. Deliberative and participatory methods can be used to navigate complex socio-economic challenges and to strengthen legitimacy of decision-making.
- Community power can build community cohesion. The common understanding and social ties that are necessary for cohesion cannot be effectively imposed from the national level. Community-anchored approaches demonstrate that cohesion is most sustainably built from the ground up.
- Community power can embed prevention and early intervention in public services. Where some parts of the public sector are pioneering new approaches that draw on the capabilities and capacities of communities, they demonstrate a route to more sustainable and prevention-focused public services.
- Community power can generate financial savings. There is growing evidence that investing in community power approaches can generate greater impact for existing spend and save money in the longer-term.

2. Current and planned approaches

Cumberland Council is already embedding many principles which lead to more communities having greater power over the decisions that affect them.

This approach begins with engagement and inclusion through our Community Engagement Framework and moves through to co-production and communities at the heart of decision making through our Community Panels and Networks and our adoption of the Place Standard.

2.1 Community Engagement Framework

The Council has a clear commitment to improving community engagement and participation with a focus on strengthening the relationship between the council and communities. As stated above, through improved community participation we can build trust and understanding which can help better shape services and improve decision-making and ultimately lead to stronger communities.

As part of the journey towards community power we have identified a need to create a whole council approach to community engagement – embedding a set of principles and procedures across the whole organisation to create a culture of working alongside all of our communities to encompass a range of voices and lived experiences, and to see this reflected in our decision making, leadership and planning.

The draft Community Engagement Framework at appendix 1 sets out some proposed principles and standards for how the council will work in this area to make sure we create a more consistent and inclusive approach across the organisation, with more opportunities to hear a range of voices earlier in the decision-making process.

The framework forms a basis for how we will work to get better at all forms of engaging, from the basics – such as being much clearer in the language we use and the communications we produce (e.g. emails and information on the website) through to new ways to work with communities on redesigning services and taking decisions (using methods such as co-design).

The draft Framework proposes the following principles:

Inclusive: Accessible spaces and formats; making it easier for people to take part; seldom heard voices; lived experience.

Collaborative: Flexible and innovative involvement opportunities for communities; co-production; developing community capacity, confidence, skills, and knowledge.

Co-ordinated: Activity is coordinated; information and intelligence is shared effectively; avoiding duplication and over or under engagement.

Meaningful: Working openly, honestly and with integrity; engagement activity is timely, well planned, well designed, proportionate, transparent and well informed.

Alongside these principles the draft Framework sets out some roles and responsibilities for both officers and elected members as well as giving some case study examples of activity.

The intention is that this will be supported by more detailed guidance through a toolkit and training opportunities so that we can build skills and knowledge across the organisation. The council can build on this Framework as it develops more sophisticated approaches and models in areas such as co-production. A key part of improving our approach is testing new methods, learning from best practice and sharing learning across the organisation.

2.2 Community Panels and Community Networks

In terms of collaboration and empowerment, the Council has introduced a new model for working with our communities and elected members. This is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it remains effective.

The new Council saw the introduction of Community Panels that replaced Local Committees, building on the positives of local decision making that local committees brought. There are eight Community Panels, four rural and 4 urban with between 5 and 7 elected members on each. These are the local formal meetings and are more focussed due to the smaller footprint than previously. These meetings provide an opportunity to consider what input there has been from across the council to the benefit of communities in the footprint area and in doing so, encourages much greater accountability from the Council services.

Each Community Panel identified priorities that reflect their areas and these were consulted on within each panel geography. These have now been formally signed off at all eight panels and will now be used to determine funding applications. These are the starting point for each of the emerging Neighbourhood Investment Plans which will be co-produced with communities through Community Networks attached to each Community Panel. An overview of the priorities across the panels is attached at Appendix 2

Each Community Panel was allocated a share of over £0.5million based on an index which considered local population health and poverty. These funds are referred to as the Neighbourhood Investment Fund and each panel is able to distribute these funds in a way that has a direct impact on the chosen priorities.

There was an initial delay to allocating funds to communities as we transitioned from Local Committees to Community Panels but we are now receiving a number of applications and are working with Members and communities to generate interest for appropriate applications.

The priorities are also the starting point for the Neighbourhood Investment Plans, (NIPs) a document produced for each Community Panel area. The draft Plans will be discussed as part of ongoing network activity to both ensure the priorities remain relevant and that the Community Panels are delivering on the priority areas agreed. The NIPs are due to be agreed at each Panel but will remain as a working document to reflect progress made. Progress will be reported to Community Panel formal meetings. The draft NIPs are currently in production.

In addition to the Panels, we have also established Community Networks, one for each Community Panel area. It was envisioned that these would be a network that anyone could join who would meet up four times a year. It was the intention that these networks would also help influence and ensure delivery of the Neighbourhood Investment Plan.

Within the first couple of months, the Community Networks were reviewed and it was identified that they were too static, formal and would only appeal to those who were happy to attend meetings over the longer term. In response, although Community Networks still exist, it is the overarching term for engagement activity and provides greater flexibility, ability to use

many forums, doesn't require 'sign up' by residents and can handle participants becoming more or less involved over time as it suits them. This approach will also help to widen the range of community voices that we get to hear. The Community Network concept is a driver to ongoing engagement activity rather than an ad hoc approach that existed previously.

To support Members to stay informed, we have introduced Member Briefings. These happen in between Community Panel meetings, are held on Teams and consist of two or three subjects. These are an opportunity for Members to learn in detail about planned or actual Council activities that affect all panel areas and to ask questions of officers and discuss in an informal setting.

This has all been introduced within the first year of the new council and some elements still need further development. The following are some of those areas:

- Engagement in the Community Development team will change emphasis so that although we can hold events that people will attend, we will seek to go where people naturally go and speak with them there. This will complement the Community Engagement Framework.
- Work is being undertaken to improve the knowledge around groups who support people with protected characteristics and other lived experience. We will encourage a strengthening of relationships with existing groups and identify gaps across Cumberland.
- The process to appoint co-opted Members has commenced for five of the eight Community Panels. This first year is a learning opportunity and will be under constant review.
- The feedback loop from network activity back to officers in the appropriate directorate is an area that needs further development.
- There is an appetite across the Council to understand community needs and to know how and where to fit into the wider framework that has been established. The Community Development Team are planning some sessions which cover the content of this report to raise awareness and develop / strengthen relationships

2.3 The Place Standard

Cumberland Council has adopted The Place Standard as a methodology for assessing the assets and areas for improvement in a community.

The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about a community, its assets and facilities. It allows consideration for the physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision making).

The tool provides prompts for discussions, allowing you to consider all the elements of a place in a methodical way. The tool pinpoints the assets of a place as well as areas where a place could improve.

This is, by design, a participative, community led, co-produced approach and following a successful pilot event on 31st January 2024, the tool will be rolled out throughout the Community Networks and will be used to drive the Neighbourhood Investment Plans attached to each Community Panel.

Cumberland Council is being seen as an exemplar on Place Standard development by partners in the region including the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the National Lottery who are part funding the approach in Cumberland.

2.4 The role of research

The council has recently worked closely with Suzanne Willson, Research Fellow in Social Inclusion and Community Engagement based at UCLan's Westlakes Campus. The work examined Community Power through the lens of co-creating approaches to participatory democracy. This focused in on some particular communities in West Cumberland and

This research sought to bring a selection of communities from West Cumberland together with new Cumberland Council to co-create new ways to work together. This was done over 18 months through community workshops, where residents explored different strategies for democratic participation and later discussed these with the Council in co-creation sessions.

The full report can be found at appendix 3 and a summary presentation in support of the research will be delivered at this meeting.

The research findings demonstrate that the Council has many of the building blocks in place to develop a meaningful approach to this agenda but there is significant potential in maintaining and possibly developing strong links with academic research as we further develop and finetune our own approaches.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

The Council is very much on the journey towards community power but we have to be aware this is "job started" rather than "job done". The councils programmes of work in relation to Community Hubs, Community Panels, Community Networks and wider Community Empowerment have great potential to place our communities at the centre of our decision making and to deliver services alongside communities in a different, more collaborative way than current models.

There are opportunities to continue to work alongside colleagues in UCLan to develop our approach Cumberland wide and to understand the issues in different communities.

The council plan and values will further ensure we work effectively towards achieving better outcomes with our communities through more open, regular dialogue and through ensuring communities can have the power they need to work with us and other stakeholders to realise their respective ambitions.

Implications:

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities -

Improving the ability of communities to determine and address their own priorities gives greater choice and control and fits closely with the councils aim to put health and well being at the heart of everything we do.

In improving community power, the council would work more closely on prioritising addressing inequalities, local economies that work for local people and delivering excellent public services, This in turn would contribute to the aims to:

- Provide accessible and trusted services that listen,
- Involve and engage;
- Drive change, learning and improving;
- Demonstrate leadership whilst working collaboratively;
- Think local first and sustainably;
- Focus on prevention and early intervention

Relevant Risks and explain how risks can be mitigated – no risks to consider at this time

Consultation / Engagement – The Draft Engagement Framework has been widely consulted upon through Directorate Management Teams. More consultation will be required.

Legal – no issues to consider

Finance – no issues to consider

Information Governance – no issues to consider

Impact Assessments –

Have you screened the decision for impacts using the Impact Assessment?
Information paper only. No decisions to screen at this time

Lead Officer Contact details:

Name: Paul Musgrave

Email: paul.musgrave@cumberland.gov.uk

Phone Number: 07900 662658

Background papers:

None

Appendices attached to report:

- 1 Draft Community Engagement Framework
- 2 Community Panel Shared Priorities
- 3 UCLan Community Power Report by Suzanne Wilson

Community Engagement Framework

Introduction

As a new council now is our opportunity to define how we will do things differently. One of these things is about how we engage with our communities and include them more in decisions that impact on them.

Our Council Plan outlines our vision for community engagement:

“We believe that our communities are best placed to determine their needs and aspirations. For us engagement isn’t just listening, it is doing things together. We value their views and ideas and so we will work alongside residents to jointly create and design services that impact on their lives. We want our residents to be involved and feel understood at every opportunity.

We will work hard to remove as many barriers, differences, and inequalities as possible to ensure that everyone in our community can engage with us. We also recognise that when we do ask people to engage with us, it has to be meaningful.

We want to meet local needs and have services shaped by local people. To do this effectively we need to work closely with our communities. We want to be a council with a presence throughout Cumberland. Where services can be delivered locally that will be our default. We will use our assets to act as bases for a range of council and partner services.”

.....

We need to create a whole council approach to community engagement – embedding a set of principles and procedures across the whole organisation to create a culture of working alongside all of our communities to encompass a range of voices and lived experiences, and to see this reflected in our decision making, leadership and planning.

Through improved community participation we can build trust and understanding, which can help better shape services and improve decision-making.

There is a wealth of research that shows how working more closely with communities to involve and enable them can benefit both councils and the communities they serve.

Getting a better understanding of what people need, what could be done together or what communities could do for themselves means councils can work better with

communities and be more efficient. Being more involved and empowered has been shown to improve outcomes for communities.

The area has faced some challenges in the past and the response by communities has demonstrated the power and capabilities they have – we need to work with communities to harness and build on those strengths.

Purpose of the Framework

The Community Engagement Framework sets out the principles and standards for how the council will work in this area to make sure we create a more consistent and inclusive approach across the organisation. It provides guidance to officers and Members to work together effectively - building clear, shared expectations that focus on what can be achieved. The Framework outlines what we aim to do to improve the way we engage, involve, and empower local people across the area.

The Framework encourages good practice, outlining ways of working across a range of activity and describes some of the ways we will ensure that we deliver our vision and principles.

This Framework details the approach to engaging with communities in order to:

- reach more people to help give everyone a voice, especially people we seldom hear from
- strengthen existing connections and establish new ones with communities and stakeholders to support ongoing conversations
- proactively seek out community and stakeholder views, concerns, and aspirations to gather a rich source of insight
- incorporate that insight into decision-making processes, confident that it is representative
- establish an ongoing partnership with the community to ensure that the community's priorities and values continue to shape services
- increase levels of trust and ownership among our communities.

The framework forms a basis for how we will work to get better at all forms of engaging, from the basics - such as being much clearer in the language we use and the communications we produce (e.g. emails and information on the website) through to new ways to work with communities on redesigning services and taking decisions (using methods such as co-design).

The Framework is supported by more detailed guidance and toolkit which include examples of good practice and techniques which can be used.

What do we mean by community?

Communities are usually defined as groups of people who share common characteristics. This could include individuals, groups, organisations, and businesses. Broadly we tend to talk about:

- Communities of Place: communities defined by a local geographical area.
- Communities of interest: shared interest or experience which might include tenants and resident groups, allotment holders, people involved in environmental projects, or people who come together to use services.
- Communities of identity: people who share a particular experience, interest or stake in an issue, or characteristics such as young people, older people, disabled people, ethnic groups, or lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people or other common bonds such as student or business communities.

A sense of community can be a fluid thing, meaning members can feel part of several communities at the same time.

What do we mean by community engagement and empowerment?

The term community engagement can mean different things to different people and encompasses a range of approaches.

Community engagement is a process, not an event (although we do often talk about 'community engagement activity' being a defined series of activities or events). It is about ongoing interactions, something that happens every day, at every level as we carry out our day-to-day business. It can involve a range of activities and different levels of public involvement.

Put simply, community engagement is about relationships and dialogue, it's about involving people.

Community empowerment is about enabling confidence, skills, and knowledge to become involved, shape and influence the planning, development, and delivery of services. Empowered communities are able to challenge, able to participate, knowledgeable about processes and rights, well informed and more confident.

Consultation is the systematic collection of community views on a range of options, solutions, alternatives and potential decisions. Consultations tend to be quantitative using techniques like surveys. In some cases, the council will have a statutory duty and be bound by legislation to consult before making changes to policy or service provision. Consultations have a clear remit and start and end points. However, consultation still forms a distinct part of an ongoing period of engagement and is part of a formal decision-making process. More details and guidance about formal consultation requirements that the council must adhere to can be found in the toolkit.

What is good engagement?

Relationships are a driving force of the new approach, and we need to continually invest in these to be able to engage well, reach those we have yet to engage with, and collaborate with different communities and partners. This will encourage better decision making and problem-solving by hearing more ideas and voices as early as possible.

Many parts of the council have existing relationships with community and stakeholder groups which they nurture over time. This enables us to better

understand the impact of our services, find out about how changes might affect communities and develop solutions to local issues.

We need to share this good practice across other parts of the organisation to achieve a more consistent approach.

The expectation set out in this Framework is that the council will move towards more regular, deeper interactions with our communities in a way that allows them to become more involved in the design and delivery of services and recognises the power that communities have to transform themselves.

Effective engagement requires a variety of approaches – there is no one size fits all. We need to try out new ways of engaging people, testing different methods to see what works. Communities, residents, and businesses all have different needs and prefer to engage using different methods and at different levels. Giving useful, accessible and timely information to communities is very important in this process.

This means early engagement, and ongoing conversations with communities. It means ensuring we are using accessible methods to allow communities to engage with us in a way that best suits them. It means using the council’s Community Engagement toolkit to upskill staff and elected members across the council ensuring they have the tools required to engage with communities effectively. The council’s Community Development Team can support engagement activity, including links into the Community Networks.

Our principles

- Inclusive
- Coordinated
- Collaborative
- Meaningful

Inclusive

Making sure we engage in diverse ways and in a variety of accessible spaces and formats. This makes it easier for people to take part, encouraging and enabling everyone to be involved. Thinking about seldom heard voices and those with lived experience and how we can engage with them.

What this means in practice.....

- Having conversations in the places and spaces where people already meet

- Understanding that 'one size does not fit all' – each community's unique strengths and resources need to be considered and approaches and techniques might need to be adapted to different/changing needs.
- Using clear, informative, jargon-free language and making sure that we don't create overly formal or complicated processes for people to navigate.
- Working with internal and external partners to identify community organisations and individuals to help us improve our reach.
- Developing ongoing relationships with different organisations that are already connected to the seldom heard so that we can call on them to foster participation.
- Identifying stakeholders and ensuring engagement meets their needs.
- Gathering information and intelligence from engagement activity to help us understand how effective it is.
- Monitoring who is and is not taking part so that we can adjust our engagement programme to ensure that all relevant points of view contribute to our decision making.
- Getting advice from the Community Development Team about existing networks and community links.
- Getting advice from the equality and diversity lead and others who may have specific knowledge about different sections of the community.

Example:

Community Panel priority engagement

Community Development officers spent 3 months engaging on draft priorities for the 8 Community Panels. The team engaged in various formats such as attending existing groups, workshops, and surveys.

Considerations which were made:

- Officers visited community organisations to engage with some less often heard voices
- A child friendly version of the survey was created in some areas where young people were a particular focus
- Printed copies of the surveys were available for those without internet access
- Engagement as run over a 3-month period to ensure time for people to have their say
- Different styles of engagement events were run across Cumberland, at various times of the day to meet the needs of the local community and ensure inclusivity.

Coordinated

Working across the organisation and with relevant agencies or community organisations to make sure that activity is coordinated, and that information and intelligence is shared effectively.

It is important that we plan engagement activity in ways that avoids duplication of effort both within and outside the organisation. That way we can make the best use of everyone's resources, avoiding duplication and over or under engagement in our communities.

What this means in practice.....

- Ensuring we co-ordinate our activity so people have time, opportunity and space to have a say.
- Making sure there are 'no surprises' – keeping communities and elected members well informed about what is going on.
- Talking to colleagues and partner organisations about upcoming issues/projects to identify any areas of potential joint engagement and make sure we avoid duplication.
- Developing a forward planning process to promote better coordination.
- Talking to the Community Development and Communications teams early on to get advice and guidance and check for duplication.
- Finding out about activity taking place through the Community Panels and Networks.
- Taking learning from previous engagement activity - sharing good practice and checking what has been done recently to avoid repetition.
- Sharing information and intelligence coming from engagement with communities or service users with the Performance and Intelligence team so that it can be built into community profiles.

Example:

Family Hub project in Aspatria

Aspatria Library has been extended to create a Family Hub which also houses the Childrens Centre. During the engagement it was key that the local elected member was kept up to date on the project so they could answer any questions locally on the changes to the services and the temporary library offer while the building was closed.

During public engagement, along with details of the project, the project team co-ordinated with internal and external partners such as the Library Service, SEND team, Adult Learning and the Childrens Centre provider who joined the events to speak to the public about services they provide and what people would like to see in the area.

Considerations which were made:

- The library will be closing, and a smaller library will run from an alternative location. Ensure library users are aware. Ensure the local member is aware.
- Are there any internal or external organisations who also want to engage this the residents of Aspatria? Is it appropriate to include these conversations at the engagement events?
- Reviewed previous engagement undertaken by the library service on what users would like and fed this into discussions.

Collaborative

Providing flexible and innovative involvement opportunities for communities to help shape the development and delivery of quality services and relevant policies that reflect local needs. Developing more collaborative decision-making processes and sharing skills. Developing community capacity, confidence, skills, and knowledge so they can get involved, shape and influence the planning, development, and delivery of services.

Building relationships is central to delivering the council's ambitions for engagement. To do this we will need to work closely with communities and community organisations to create and nurture these relationships.

What this means in practice.....

- Developing ongoing relationships with key people and groups.
- Working with internal and external partners to identify community organisations and individuals to help us improve our reach.
- Supporting the community in organising/facilitating community-based action where appropriate.
- Supporting spaces where groups and organisations can meet and grow.
- Exploring co-design and co-production options in as many areas as possible - opening up more of our work to our communities, enabling them to design and produce policies and services with us.
- Community Development Officers taking a lead role in developing more asset-based approaches and providing support and training to other teams in this area.

Example:

Support during COVID lockdowns

Cumberland has experienced significant flooding and other emergencies over the years and through this local emergency response groups have formed. The Community Development Team have supported a number of these groups to

become established and have kept in touch over the years. These relationships became vital to the council during COVID as groups, along with support from officers where required, altered their response, and stepped up to support the local community.

Community Development Officers set up cluster groups and held regular tele-conferences to enable the flow of information in and out of the council. They also mapped where there were gaps in support and were able to use their knowledge of local organisations to co-ordinate conversations and set up new support groups.

Considerations which were made:

- How can the council work safely with community organisations?
- What communities have emergency response groups?
- Are the existing groups able to support during lockdown periods?
- Are there any geographical areas without a response group?
- Where there are gaps, which other organisations are we aware of? And can we work with these organisations to form a group?
- What support and advice do groups need to safely support their communities during the lockdown periods?
- How can the council create effective two-way flow of information with groups and the community?

Meaningful

Working openly, honestly and with integrity with communities. Ensuring our language is clear and information is easy to find. Making sure that engagement activity is timely, well planned, well designed, and proportionate so that it can feed into decision making processes. People engaging with us need to be able to see how their involvement has made a difference.

What this means in practice.....

Timely

- Engagement should take place at a formative stage in the process of developing policy, reviewing a service, or making plans for our places to enable quality conversations and real community involvement or influence.
- Developing engagement plans that set out the end-to-end engagement so that is clear about when people will be able to collaborate with the council, and influence decisions and when they will know how they have had an impact on the project.

- The length of any defined engagement period needs to allow sufficient time for people to find out about the opportunity to be involved, consider the issues, and take part.

Well planned and proportionate

This is about using the right tools and techniques at the right times. There should be an engagement plan and it should consider:

- Being clear on why we are engaging and what we are engaging on.
- Who will be affected and who has an interest in the project/issue.
- Consider when and where we need to engage to ensure we capture the target audience.
- What are the activities we need to do to encourage participation.
- Consider the size of the project and the scale of the impact. For complex issues/topics we might need to consider more sophisticated approaches such as Citizens Jurys.
- Consider any wider implications for the project, such as the complexity of the issue.

Transparent

People need to be kept informed about the impact of their contribution so that we can create a culture of involvement and build trust.

- Making sure that engagement plans include how we intend to keep people informed of the decisions we make.
- Making clear to those taking part how their involvement has had an impact on what is going to happen next, and where things cannot be changed.
- Making sure that information and insight from local communities is clearly reflected in the decisions we make.
- Providing feedback on the result of our engagement activities in simple, accessible, clear and concise ways such as a 'you said, we did' style.
- Explaining why we have not included suggestions and feedback from people in the final project.
- Providing updates where progress is delayed, keeping people connected to the process.
- Telling people where to find any future updates.

Informed

- Carrying out background research (both local and national) to inform any engagement planning e.g. socio-economic data, best practice.
- Using local intelligence e.g. what we know about local service use and service need, what local people and local organisations have told us already.
- Gaining an understanding of circumstances, inequalities, outcomes etc as they pertain to a given group.
- Finding out what tools and techniques have and haven't worked in the past.

Example:

Millom and Haverigg Flood Defense scheme

The Millom and Haverigg Flood Defense scheme required targeted engagement in the Millom area. Prior to the scheme being developed, local intelligence and intelligence from partner agencies was gathered to understand the flooding issue in Millom. Regular meetings were held with residents throughout the scheme to ensure they were kept up to date with what was planned progress along the way and what the outcome would be for the local area.

Considerations which were made:

- Who can provide local intelligence?
- What agencies are involved?
- Who has been directly affected by past flooding?
- Who has been indirectly affected by flooding?
- How can people stay in contact throughout the scheme?
- Formation of an engagement plan
- What information do people want to know?
- What information is confidential?

Role of Elected Members

Our elected members have an important role to play as community leaders within their local communities. Members can create a climate for better engagement between public sector, voluntary sector and community leaders, bringing local activity together and acting as a bridge between the Council and local communities. They know the enablers and community leaders locally and can help to ensure that these community enablers have the right help and support to be successful in their activities.

Our members can:

- Facilitate the flow of information and intelligence between local communities and the Council, both in identifying the issues and opportunities within their wards, and in providing the intelligence local communities need in order to get involved.
- Engage with and represent their communities with other organisations.
- Manage the expectations of communities.
- Act as a link between community groups and public services to build real grassroots partnerships to meet local identified need.

Role of Council Officers

Our officers have a huge role to play in improving the way we involve and interact with our communities. They need to be able to challenge historical patterns and conventions and establish new standards and approaches.

This means being able to identify when and how to involve people, planning involvement effectively and having access to the right tools, skills, knowledge, and information.

Our officers will need to:

- Develop ongoing relationships with colleagues, partners, communities, and service users.
- Consider when engagement will be required when shaping services.
- Follow the principles set out in this Framework and the toolkit.
- Use toolkits, guidance and information provided.
- Attend training to improve skills in community engagement and involvement.
- Make time to consider how to engage with communities and service users early in any process and avoid going straight to consultation on firmed up proposals.

Officers should use the toolkit for initial support and guidance. If further advice is required, the Community Development Team can assist.

Role of the Community Development Team

The council has a designated Community Development Team that uses engagement as one of its tools. To provide a consistent standard across the council the Community Development Team will:

- Provide advice and guidance to colleagues across the council.
- Encourage teams to develop appropriate engagement plans, considering relevant stakeholders who will be impacted by any proposal.
- Publish an engagement toolkit and offer training to Council teams, as well as direct support where engagement is likely to be more complex ensuring that those facilitating engagement activity have the relevant knowledge, skills, and training to do the work.

Summary

The council wants to improve how we engage with, listen to, involve, and empower communities, working together to create, influence, design and deliver services, and supporting strong, active, and inclusive communities.

The Framework provides an overview of the council's aspirations to create a more consistent and inclusive approach to community engagement. It aims to build a common understanding of how we can improve engagement by setting principles

and standards - building clear, shared expectations that focus on what can be achieved and outlining a new approach and culture across the organisation.

The Engagement Toolkit provides information on best practice and a variety of ways of working to support this new approach.

DRAFT

Cumberland Council Community Panel Priorities 2023-2025

	Border, Fellside & North Carlisle	Carlisle West	Fells and Solway	Lakes to Sea	Petteril	South Cumberland	Whitehaven and Coastal	Workington Together
Accessibility and Connectivity	<i>Highways</i>		<i>Highways and Transport Issues</i>	<i>Transport for the Community</i>		<i>Accessibility and Connectivity</i>		
Children and Young People					<i>Children and Young People</i>	<i>Supporting Children, Families and Young People</i>		<i>Empowering Children and Young People to be the best</i>
Community Facilities and Activities	<i>Community Facilities and Support</i>	<i>City and Town Centre</i>	<i>Community Infrastructure</i>	<i>Community Involvement</i>			<i>Addressing inequalities through improved access to services and opportunities</i>	
Community Resilience				<i>Community Resilience</i>				<i>Supporting Communities to Help Themselves</i>
Community Safety		<i>Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour</i>	<i>Community Safety and Rural Crime</i>					
Economy							<i>A Local Economy that is thriving and benefits everyone</i>	
Environment	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Environmental Issues</i>			<i>Environment</i>	<i>Improving local Living Environment</i>	<i>A Local Environment where individuals, households and communities can live well and thrive</i>	
Health and Wellbeing		<i>Public Service Framework</i>	<i>Priorities to run alongside Cumberland Council's aim of improving the health and wellbeing of residents.</i>	<i>Community Health and Wellbeing</i>	<i>Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health</i>	<i>Health & Wellbeing</i>	<i>Better Health and Wellbeing for all</i>	<i>Food Poverty</i>
Housing		<i>Housing</i>						

This page is intentionally left blank

Community Power

Co-Creating Approaches to Participatory Democracy



Written by Suzanne Wilson, Research Fellow in Social Inclusion and Community Engagement, UCLan Westlakes Campus

Reviewed and approved by residents in Ewanrigg, Millom, Moorclose and South Whitehaven

December 2023

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
PART ONE: Introduction	6
Background	6
Participatory Democracy	6
Purpose of this Project Report	7
Methods	8
PART TWO: Democratic Participation.....	12
Methods	12
Results	13
Community Development Approach (Agenda Setting).....	13
Organised Community Representation (Policy Development and Decision Making).....	15
Public Dialogue (Policy Development)	17
Co-Production (Implementation).....	18
Factors that influence participation.....	21
Summary	22
PART THREE: Understanding Participation from a Relational Perspective.....	23
Relational Theory, Political Participation and Policy	24
Fostering Democratic Relationships in Community-Council Partnerships	25
Accessible and Equal Spaces	25
Respect and Equality.....	28
Accountability and Transparency.....	29
Commitment to the Community.....	30
Relational Principles Behind a Community-Council Partnership.....	32
PART FOUR: Turning Research into Action	33
Outcomes	33
Anticipated outcomes.....	34
Responding to Resistance by Understanding Power Dynamics	35
Recommendations	38
Concluding Comments	39
References	40
Appendices	42
Appendix A: Community Participant Demographics	42
Appendix B: Policy Actor Participant Demographics.....	43
Appendix C: Community Approaches to Participatory Democracy.....	44
Appendix D: Framework for Community Engagement and Participation	48

Acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals and organisations without whom this work would not have been possible. Firstly, we would like to thank the residents who participated in this research. All participants kindly gave a significant amount of their time and engaged fully in the process. It was a privilege to work alongside the passionate young people and adults who are a real asset to their community.

Grassroots organisations were critical in recruiting residents for the research and providing venues to host the community workshops. My sincere thanks go to Joanne Pears from Shackles Off Youth Projects in Millom, Jacq Cardy from South Whitehaven Youth Partnership in South Whitehaven, Angela Good from South Workington Youth Partnership in Moorclose and Sharon Barnes and Kate Whitemarsh from The Centre, in Ewanrigg. Staff from Rosehill Theatre and Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) also gave their time to support workshops, whose skills and expertise were of great value.

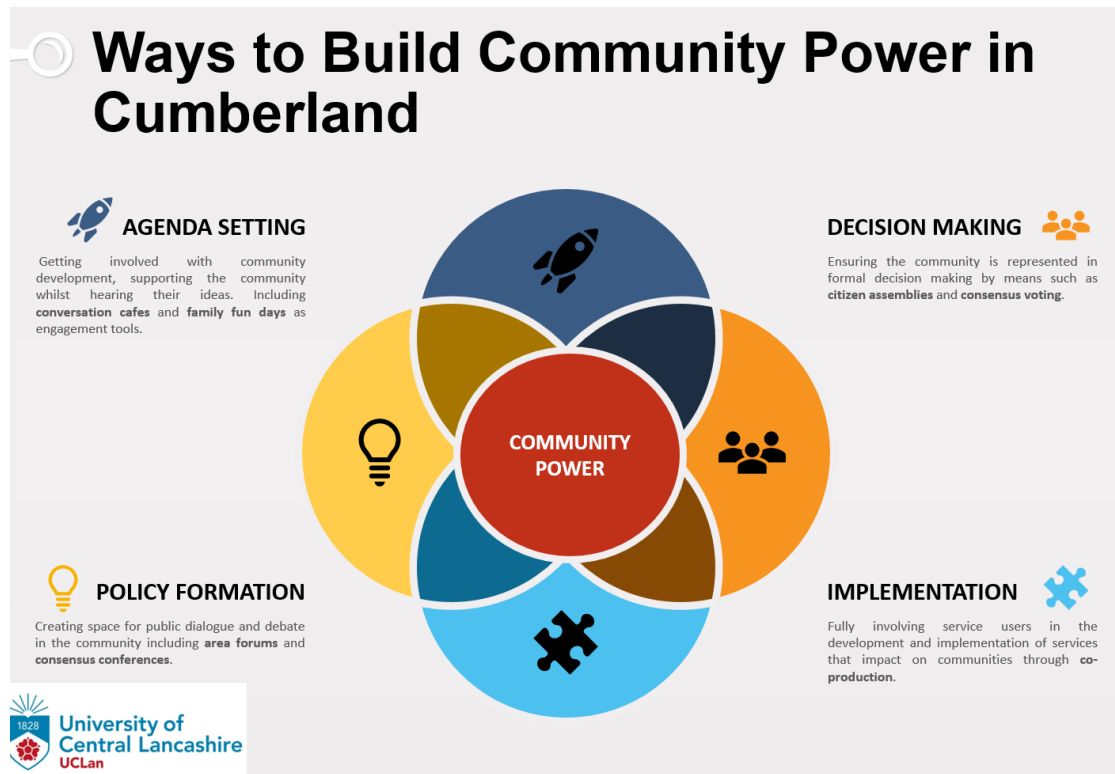
Cumberland Council have supported and engaged with the project from its inception. Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Executive Member for Governance and Thriving Communities, Lisa Brown, has fully embraced the ethos of the research and has been open to innovation and critical reflections. Lizzy Shaw, (Senior Manager, Community Services) has given open access to the Community Development Officers who were involved in the co-creation workshops and in using the results to make sustainable change. My thanks go to Lizzy and her team, including Tamsin Beattie, Hayley Bishop, Liz Nicol and Carole Tubman.

A number of elected members from Cumberland Council participated in the co-creative workshops and in subsequent follow up sessions. My thanks are with Martin Harris, Bob Kelly, Elaine Lynch, Carni McCarron-Holmes, Bill Pegram, Denise Rollo, Stephen Stoddart and Emma Williamson, along with Linda Radcliffe from Maryport Town Council. Furthermore, I would like to thank Anna Todd, Participation Officer, for supporting both young people's workshops where her expertise was invaluable.

Finally, I would like to thank a number of the officers for their constructive feedback in the development of this report. In particular, we would like to thank Julie Friend, Ian Hinde, and Joel Rasbash, who have offered critical guidance in shaping the document.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research, conducted by the UCLan Westlakes campus sought to bring communities together with the new Cumberland Council to co-create new ways to work together. This was done over 18 months through community workshops, where residents explored different strategies for democratic participation and later discussed these with the Council in co-creation sessions. The strategies developed by residents are summarised below:



The most important issue for communities was that any approach must be based in their community with opportunities for open and honest discussions with the Council. A voice and an opportunity for discussion were more critical to the community than having formal decision-making responsibilities, although some residents were interested in this.

It was widely felt that building strong, trusting relationships between communities and the Council was the foundation of any collaborative strategy. With this in mind, communities developed a relational framework which was endorsed by officers involved in the project. This framework is presented below:

Relational Principles Behind a Community-Council Partnership



The research has produced numerous outputs and outcomes, including providing an inclusive space for discussion and support for developing engagement strategies to promote the new Community Network. Residents reported increased confidence and awareness of local democratic processes as a result of being involved in the research, and community organisations benefited through developing their networks. The research is providing evidence for the promotion of a developing culture of participation within Cumberland Council, something which is explicitly referred to in the Council Plan (Cumberland Council, 2023). It is also anticipated that the frameworks presented in this report will inform a number of Cumberland Council policies.

Four key recommendations are presented:

1. Provide accessible and inclusive place-based opportunities for participation.
2. Develop a hybrid community communication strategy.
3. Involve marginalised young people in decision-making through collaborating with gatekeeping organisations.
4. Invest time to build trusting relationships with communities, adopting the relational principles behind a community-council partnership.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

The Westlakes campus of UCLan hosts a cluster of social science research who conduct local, independent research, funded by Westlakes Research Limited. Within this cluster there is a growing portfolio of community action research, working with low-income coastal communities to understand their experience of a number of key policy areas. These include education, health and community engagement. A key research project, spanning five years was the Connected Communities Cumbria research, which worked with children and young people from Mirehouse and Woodhouse in Whitehaven, Moorclose in Workington and Ormsgill in Barrow, to understand the social networks and perceptions of their communities (Wilson & Morris, 2023a; Wilson & Morris, 2023b, Wilson & Morris, 2020, Wilson, Morris & Williamson, 2020).

The Connected Communities Cumbria research found that of 646 residents, only nine people reported they would approach 'the Council' or a 'councillor'¹ if they wanted to make a positive change in their community. In response to these findings and the merging of the local borough and county councils into a unitary authority, Westlakes UCLan undertook some focused research in this area with the central purpose:

To work with residents from low-income coastal communities to co-create a new approach to participatory democracy with Cumberland Council.

This was done through a series of workshops with residents and the Council, but before describing the methods undertaken, a brief overview of participatory democracy and policy co-production is provided.

Participatory Democracy

The importance of including communities in decision-making that impacts on them has received refreshed attention in the public policy arena following the community responses to community need during the Covid-19 pandemic. Grassroots mutual aid groups responded and mobilised to meet the needs of vulnerable people within their communities (Chevé, 2021). For example, the 'Levelling Up Our Communities' report argued that "a wholly new paradigm is possible in which community power replaces the dominance of remote public and private sector bureaucracies" (Kruger, 2020, p.7). Within this argument is the recommendation for a Community Power Act to ensure that public agencies take deliberate steps to involve and empower communities. Similarly, Nesta, a national charity which supports social innovation, recommends revolutionising public services to be embedded in collective power, appreciating social connections and neighbourhood relationships, and investing in the capabilities of those communities (Nesta, 2020).

Participatory democracy is defined as "a polity in which each citizen participates in self-government through the offering and receiving of public reasons for collective laws and policies" (Warren, 2020). Participatory democracy affects governance, empowerment, and democratic outcomes (Avritzer, 2002; Baiocchi, 2005; Barber, 2003; Fung & Wright, 2003; Goldfrank, 2007; Labonne & Chase, 2009; Wampler, 2007), along with individual wellbeing and sense of belonging (Boulding & Wampler, 2010). Community Power sought to identify ways to include socially excluded communities in local democratic

¹ Councils were referred to collectively in these responses.

processes through co-production, working with Cumberland Council to reach a consensus on strategies that would suit both parties. Policy co-production is defined as:

the actions taken by both the service agent and the citizen [that] are based on their joint consideration of the problem and both share responsibility for deciding what action to take and each accord legitimacy to the responsibility to the other (Durose & Richardson, 2015, p.35).

From this definition, Community Power sought to co-create a new approach to participatory democracy.

Purpose of this Project Report

This report describes the methods used to work with communities to help them identify what approaches they felt would be effective within their own communities. It then describes the four main approaches developed, describing what they are and why residents have chosen these methods. The potential benefit of the application of these to Cumberland Council will be described, along with a critical reflection on these choices in light of key issues emerging throughout the research. Four themes generated around relationships will be presented, which are used then to inform four relational principles behind community-council partnerships.

Community action research in policy presents a sensitive context where the researcher must balance criticality with relationality, offering a critical and honest presentation of the data whilst maintaining relationships with policy actors. The Community Power research endeavoured to achieve both goals, following a recognised guiding framework (Bartles and Wittmayer, 2020). Through developing trusting relationships with all stakeholders, over time, with clear expectations of roles, the author is confident these aims were met. This is evidenced through the further collaborations with both the Council and the communities resulting from this research project.

The results presented are intended to portray the accounts provided by residents in a clear and objective way. The research seeks to understand how communities interpret and perceive their interactions and relationships with the local authorities, rather than state their accounts as 'facts'. Simply, this research is concerned with understanding 'their truths'. Within these accounts, it is important to understand the challenges residents perceive in order to develop ways to work collaboratively in the future. The author acknowledges the dedication of elected members and officers across Cumberland to work with communities to make the area a great place to live.

Methods

Participants

The project sought to work with communities experiencing social exclusion, and a proxy of multi-deprivation was used to operationalise the concept. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), South Whitehaven, Ewanrigg and Moorclose were in 10% most deprived areas in the county (IMD, 2019) and thus were considered to be socially excluded. Millom is considered to be within the 30% of most deprived areas in the county (IMD, 2019) but was included due to its significant geographic isolation, which also impacts on social inclusion (Atkinson, 2009).

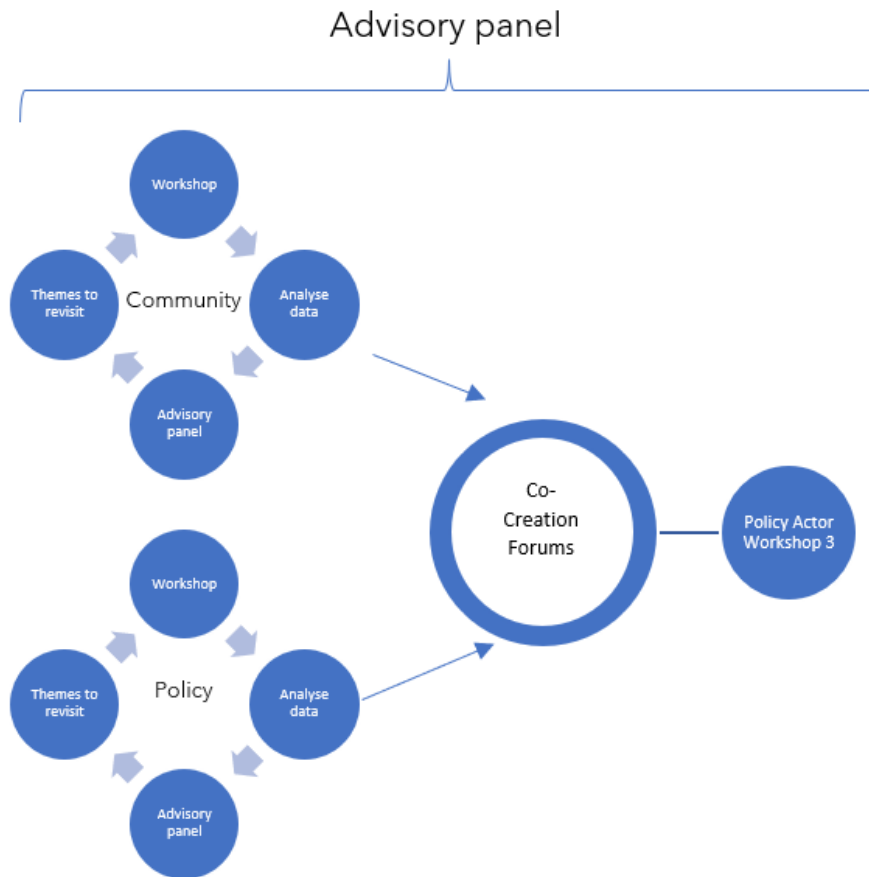
Building on specific community-based recruitment strategies used previously by the author (Wilson, 2020), purposeful sampling was used, targeting specific communities. A total of 48 community participants took part in the workshops, with 15 young people (aged between 11-17 years old) and 25 adults attending all sessions (n=40) (see Appendix A for demographic information).

Community Power also sought to collaborate with policy actors from various policy areas and on every level. The selection criterion for policy actors was that they should be any individual working for the local authorities or a public body whose work involves or impacts on South Whitehaven, Moorclose, Millom or Ewanrigg. This includes elected members, officers, and street-level bureaucrats (such as social workers, police and teachers). A total of 19 policy actors participated in at least one session (policy actor workshops or co-creation sessions). Specifically, 11 elected members were involved, two Directors of services, four senior officers and four community development officers (see Appendix B for demographic information).

Throughout this report direct quotes are used to bring the data to life and enhance meaning, where all participants' accounts are anonymised using pseudonyms.

Research Process

The research process was one that worked collaboratively with community and policy participants in a variety of settings over a period of approximately 18 months. The dynamic research process is summarised in the figure below:



Community Workshops

A total of six workshops took place in each community, each lasting for approximately two hours. All sessions took place in a community centre located in the target community, used by the gatekeeping organisation involved in the research. Workshops aimed to:

1. Build and maintain relationships within each group.
2. Provide a space for participants to reflect on their community, particularly in light of participation with local and national democracy.
3. Introduce key elements of the local democratic process.
4. Produce an original approach to engage communities in the local democratic process.
5. Identify key policy actors to recruit as policy actor participants.
6. Prepare participants for working alongside the policy actors to finalise an original approach to engaging communities in the local democratic process.

Sessions also provided opportunities for participants to be updated on the progress of the project. Although a structured programme was developed, this was applied loosely during the workshops, allowing the community participants to take the lead on the direction of conversations and topics covered. In one community the residents agreed that they would prefer to talk, rather than complete structured activities. By allowing conversations to flow naturally a number of unexpected themes arose in all groups.

Policy Actor Workshops

Two policy actor workshops took place, both using Microsoft Teams consisting of two different workshops with two different groups of people, as directed by the Council. The first workshop was held with senior elected members and officers, which aimed to:

1. Provide an introduction and background to the Community Power project.
2. Reflect on opportunities and challenges of working with low-income coastal communities.
3. Share the Council's existing ideas to engage communities in the democratic process.
4. Identify further policy actors recruited to be policy participants.

The second workshop, held with elected members and community development officers, aimed to:

1. Provide an introduction and background to the Community Power project.
2. Reflect on opportunities and challenges of working with low-income coastal communities.
3. Critically discuss the Council's existing ideas to engage communities in the democratic process.
4. Prepare for working alongside the community members to finalise an original approach to engaging communities in the democratic process.

Co-Creation Forum

In the initial project design, it was anticipated that a large, high-profile event would be held, bringing all participants together to co-create an overarching approach to engage communities in the democratic process with Cumberland Council. However, both communities and policy actors strongly felt that communities are heterogeneous and generalised approaches would not meet the nuanced needs of each community. In response, smaller co-creation forums were held within each respective community in the same venue, day of the week and time as that on which the community workshops were held.

The community participants designed the structure of all the co-creation forums during a dedicated preparation workshop. A leaflet summarising all key topics discussed in the community workshops was produced and given to all community participants before the co-creation forum to ensure they felt prepared and informed. An online or face-to-face briefing session was held with policy actors ahead of the co-creation forums to discuss the structure of the session, identify any specific objectives the policy actors would like to achieve through the process and emphasise the importance of an inclusive and equitable space.

Although community participants designed each session, the agreed structure for all groups revolved around six activities, summarised below:

1. Icebreaker activity.
2. General questions to policy actors.
3. Community participants share their ideas for engaging communities in the local democratic process, followed by feedback from policy actor participants.
4. Policy actor participants share their ideas for engaging communities in the local democratic process, followed by feedback from community participants.
5. All participants pool ideas and come to an agreement on a strategy to engage communities in the local democratic process.
6. Next steps identified moving forward.

In practice, activities 3, 4 and 5 occurred concurrently, with all sessions taking the form of a dialogical forum based on discussion rather than a structured workshop. Throughout all the co-creation forums there was an awareness that developing new approaches takes time and that consensus on a strategy to engage communities could not be achieved within one session. Rather, the final activity took the form of all participants agreeing on their role in the process and with policy actors agreeing to a number of actions, including returning to the communities to develop the strategy further.

Following the completion of the co-creation forum a specific debrief session was held, bringing all community development officers together with senior officers at Cumberland Council to develop a strategy to ensure sustained and authentic community engagement. Unlike the first two policy actor sessions, this workshop was face-to-face, at the UCLan Westlakes campus.

Including Young Adults with Learning Difficulties

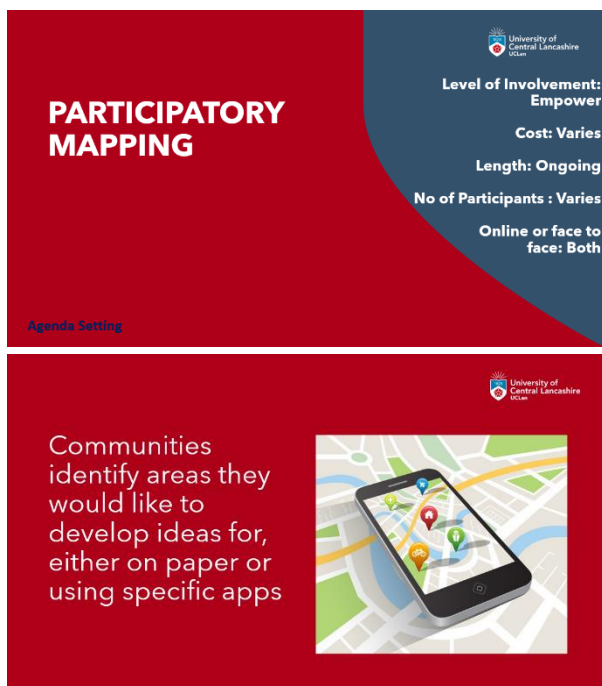
The Moorclose sample included a group of young adults who use the day services provided by the community centre. After consulting the community centre manager, it was agreed that sessions should be structured to be inclusive, with all participants working together in one group. However, during the first workshop, it was clear that this structure did not allow young adults to participate meaningfully. A revised structure was agreed upon after wider consultation with experts in research and practice concerning including people with learning difficulties. The centre manager facilitated a separate workshop after both groups had eaten lunch together. Additional material was produced for the workshops with young adults, with fewer and more simple activities, using images to help support understanding. The skills and experience of the centre manager ensured effective communication relating to the workshop activities and in interpreting young people's responses accordingly.

PART TWO: DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

A core aspect of the Community Power project involved introducing participatory democracy approaches, inviting residents to critically reflect on which, if any, could be realistically developed within their community. This included conveying a wealth of information to residents within a relatively short time, with considerable thought invested in ensuring the exercise was accessible, being mindful of educational background, reading and writing fluency and prior understanding of participatory approaches.

Methods

In order to present information about a range of different participatory methods, an interactive card activity was developed, where different forms of participatory democracy were summarised on A5 pieces of card. It was hoped that having something tangible that



participants could physically touch would also make the content easier to engage with. The front side of the card provided a succinct summary of key factors to consider (for example, cost, number of participants and method of delivery) and was designed in such a way as to introduce the name of the approach without being too daunting in providing too much text. The reverse side of the card was designed to provide an overview of the method and the accompanying photo was presented in order to support participants in understanding the approach.

National and local stakeholders were consulted throughout the development of the cards, including the civil servants in central government's 'policy lab', the advisory panel for the project and with academic peers. Prototypes of the cards were shared with the project advisory panel and academic peers to gain critical feedback on the face validity and accessibility of the cards. There were no recommendations for revision.

The card activity was delivered over two workshops, with two discrete stages, both of which involved facilitated discussion, carried out by either myself or a partner involved in the research. In the adult groups, these were CVS Cumbria and Moorclose Community Centre, and in the group working with young people, this was South Whitehaven Youth Project and Shackles Off Youth Projects, with the additional support of Rosehill Theatre.

Stage One

The first stage introduced residents to the policy cycle, presented as comprising four areas; agenda setting, policy formation, decision making and implementation. Residents allocated themselves into small groups and were asked to choose two different stages of the policy process. They were then presented with participatory democracy cards for the respective process stages they selected. Facilitated discussions took place, critically reflecting on how suitable each approach would be if applied within their community. Cards presenting approaches that were felt to be suitable were placed on a sheet of

paper with the respective policy process stage and a photo was taken of these to capture the outcome of the exercise. The groups then reconvened and shared the outcome of their activity.



Stage two

In the following session, residents were presented with the cards they selected as having potential for being developed in their community, reminding them that this would be what they could share with Cumberland Council when they met. In pairs, residents were asked to select one or two cards to explore in more detail. Residents were given two large sheets of paper inviting them to consider whether these approaches could be implemented in their community. The pairs were then invited to share their ideas with the wider group.

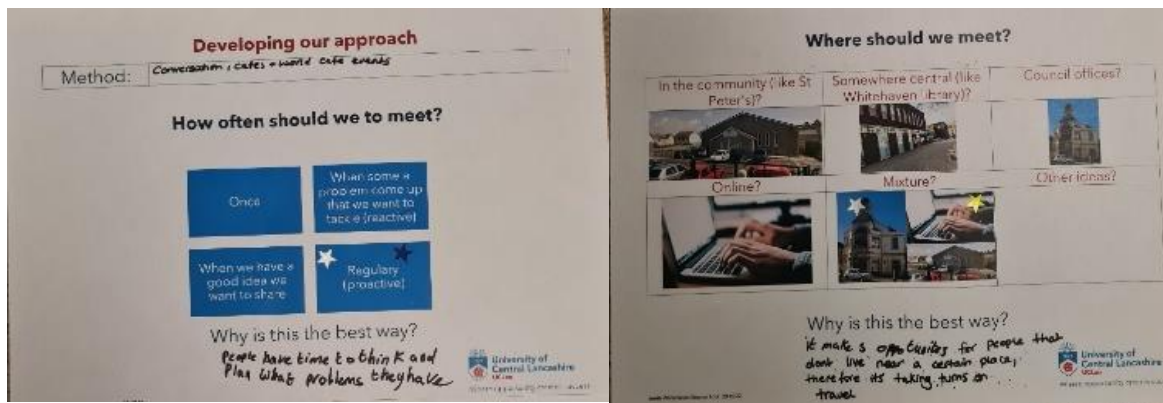
The participatory democracy approaches chosen by each community were then transposed into an infographic and presented to the community in the next workshop. Residents were asked for their critical feedback, confirming whether or not this was an accurate representation of what they wanted. In all cases residents agreed that it was.

Results

All four groups completed both stages of the exercise, resulting in 37 cards being selected in stage one and 16 cards being selected for detailed follow-up. The approaches developed by the four communities can be categorised into four broad thematic areas: a community development approach, organised community representation, public dialogue and co-production.

Community Development Approach (Agenda Setting)

Residents sought an approach embedded in the community, based in community venues, open to the public, with a family focus. An informal space, providing all community members with an equitable forum to share their views, was unanimously favoured, with this form of 'conversation café' style approach being selected by all groups at stages one and two of the research.



An approach embedded in the community can potentially yield secondary benefits, beyond policy development, for example, through fundraising, providing free food or offering fun activities for children. It was felt that a family-orientated event may attract people who may not have previously participated in any local democratic engagement activity, like public consultation events or surveys. Thus, this approach was seen as a way of engaging with seldom-heard groups, whom may be more vulnerable to social exclusion.

A key feature of this community development approach is a spirit of collaboration and equal power distribution between the Council and community organisations, entrusting in these essential organisations' connections, assets and local knowledge. Though working side by side with grassroots organisations, the Council can work to create a shared identity with the community, all working together for the benefit of the community. It values and shows appreciation of the capacity and strengths existing within the community, recognising and celebrating the great work already taking place.

Residents felt such events could be held two to four times a year, within the community itself. Residents who were actively involved in existing groups felt this approach could be complemented with regular visits to such groups and explicitly stated they would welcome regular visits from their elected representatives and other members of the Council. The passage below describes a discussion between adult residents, describing the rationale behind this approach:

- Stacey I think the one that we liked the best was the coffee and chat one, we already do that here.
- Jane You tend to find if it's too formal nobody will... maybe if it's just going with the flow.
- Q So if they had someone friendly turn up and say, oh do you mind if I ask people's views?
- May Oh yes because we've had Age Concern in here, Citizen's Advice.
- Jane And I think the best thing about it is honesty and you are trusted and you're genuine I think that's what a lot of people, that's why you're always packed when it's coffee and crack and stuff like that because they know.
- May Put anything on in here, free food and they will come.

Here, informality, connections with existing services, trust and the provision of free food were highlighted as being effective in engaging community members in agenda-setting.

Through these events, elected members have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the community by volunteering, alongside seeking views and input from residents. Relations between the Council could be effectively developed by dedicating time to organising and delivering these events.

Developing our approach

Method: Edinburgh case

How often should we to meet?

General word a brand managed by elected members

Once	When some a problem come up that we want to tackle (reactive)
When we have a good idea we want to share	Regularly (proactive)

How to make it more of a regular thing

Why is this the best way?

University of Central Lancashire

Where should we meet?

In the community (like Moorclose Community Centre)?	Somewhere central (like the Carnegie Theatre)?	Council offices?
Online?	Mixture?	Other ideas?

Need to go good to the community
take this to get to some people

Why is this the best way?

University of Central Lancashire

Reflecting on this choice of approach in a wider context, the strong place attachment and sense of community shine through in residents' accounts. It illustrates the strength of capacity already existing within communities, that have created a space for residents to meet where they feel comfortable, with a drive to maximise engagement to benefit the community.

Organised Community Representation (Policy Development and Decision Making)

Residents (mostly adult residents) would value some form of organised community representation whereby traditional power structures are removed, and a selected member of the community is represented alongside the Council. Although these differ slightly across communities (citizens' assembly, citizens' jury and citizen panel), the focus of this approach was to have an event distribution of power.

Where should we meet?

In the community (like Moorclose Community Centre)?	Somewhere central (like the Carnegie Theatre)?	Council offices?
Online?	Mixture? ✓	Other ideas?

In order to maintain a presence within the Council
To reach as much of the community as possible

Why is this the best way?

University of Central Lancashire

Developing our approach

Method: Citizens Assembly

How often should we to meet?

Once	When some a problem come up that we want to tackle (reactive)
When we have a good idea we want to share	Regularly (proactive)

Decision

Why is this the best way?

Keeps things fresh
New issues come up all the time
Shows maintained interest - not going away

University of Central Lancashire

Residents said they wanted someone, chosen by the community, who would have an equal position of power in formal Council meetings where policy decisions are made, as summarised below:

I think that a delegation being allowed into that meeting but being allowed to say what you want to and not being told to shut up (May, retired grandmother)

The quote also illustrates how May feels that the Council traditionally treats communities when they try to have a say. This relates to a narrative that was present throughout the research, in which residents often described how they felt unheard and looked down

upon by elected members and council officers.² Residents were keen to develop an approach where they felt they would be treated with respect and looked upon as having equal value.

On a practical level, the groups differ on how often they think meetings should take place, with some feeling such a group should function to respond to specific needs (react), whereas others felt there should be set meeting times (act). It was felt that these meetings should occur in various locations, including the community, and within council facilities so that relevant officers could be easily accessed for information.

Although residents said they wanted some formal representation they had concerns about selecting such a representative. One group expressed concerns about a random sampling approach, worrying about the trustworthiness of someone being selected using this method.

That would depend on who it was and could they be trustworthy for you to go and tell them. It's like me saying to you, now I'm going to tell you something, this is this, and I know that she's not going to tell anybody else (Claire, retired mother)

The above quote provides some insight into the complex dynamics within communities, where not all residents are seen as having shared values and being trustworthy. Residents wanted some control over who would be selected to represent in this more formalised approach but had little faith in traditional democratic processes, such as voting. This attitude is reflected in the low voting turnout in local and national elections in these areas, which appears to imply a lack of faith in the wider political system.

Time was given to explore alternative recruitment strategies for community representation in decision-making, but groups could not see how the 'right' resident could be selected for the position. A thorough vetting and safeguarding system was felt to be important whatever final recruitment process was chosen.

The degree of responsibility within this position was also a concern of some residents, who worried that community representatives may be vulnerable to abuse from other residents regarding unresolved issues.

To me you've got to be interested in like volunteering. I wouldn't like to be, I wouldn't do that, because you'd have people coming up to you in the street and going, hey you, you were on that thing, why didn't you, no (May, retired grandmother)

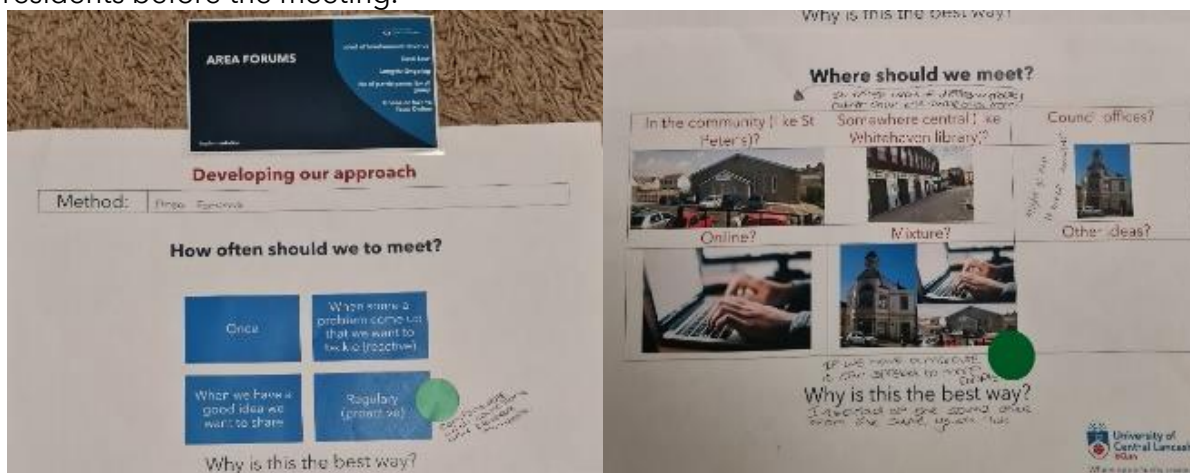
The discussions concerning the responsibility of the role revealed a hesitancy in relation to volunteering for such positions of power themselves. The reasons given for this were fear of retribution from community members but could also be related to the level of knowledge, time and skill required within formal democratic processes, something which feels very distant from their own skill set and experience.

² Some residents expressed that this was just "they way things were", suggesting this narrative is sometimes based on an accepted norm rather than being entirely accurate. However, some residents provided very clear examples of when they felt unheard in decision-making. These include discussions around the closure of wards at a local cottage hospital, the use of a council-owned bowling green, and being blocked by elected members on social media when they have challenged a decision on this platform.

The adoption of such an approach would provide Cumberland Council with the opportunity to show a commitment to authentic collaboration with the community, where residents are viewed as experts in the affairs of their community.

Public Dialogue (Policy Development)

Residents desire a space for all members of the community to have a voice around a given issue that concerns them and to explore ways to create solutions collectively. This approach, particularly favoured by young people, was felt to be more likely to be effective if held within the community periodically, focusing on a specific issue identified by residents before the meeting.



The rationale for this choice of approach was simply a desire for everyone to have a say, in public, on equal ground. Communities favoured approaches including consensus conferences, local issues forums and area forums, with issues surrounding accessibility and group size being discussed at length in all groups. One of the central concerns around accessibility focused on generational issues, and communities debated the pros and cons of face-to-face versus online approaches.

I think it's got to be inclusive for all because we don't want to leave certain generations behind by everything being accessible online (Jane, full time carer)

All groups felt that face-to-face approaches would offer a more inclusive space, especially for the older generation, but some young adults said that they would feel more comfortable and would better engage in an online space.

Some like to go online though because they don't like speaking up (Georgina, young working mother)

It was agreed that a hybrid approach to a public dialogue would be the most inclusive strategy to adopt, as summarised by one young person:

I think like a mix of the online and the sit around the table and just ask what they want (Davy, young person, male)

The desire for an inclusive dialogical space, open to all, conflicted with a desire for a small group size. The sentiments of most adult participants are summarised in the following discussion:

Deborah I think smaller would be better.

Joseph They're more likely to hold them to account.
Deborah If there was a load it would be a free for all, wouldn't it?

It was felt that smaller groups would facilitate focused discussion and ensure that all present could have a say. In contrast, it was felt that large groups would compromise purposeful discussions.

There was, however, another generational difference when discussing group size, with one group of young people having a strong preference for an approach open to all residents, as is summarised below:

Spencer An open group, as it would allow for fewer biases.
Laura Open group.
Sophie Yes, open group.
Q So tell me more about biases, what do you mean by that?
Spencer If you select a group of similar people they'll usually have similar opinions.
Sophie Sometimes you can end up with a group, like people who basically want their own opinions, if you just pick certain people. So an open group would be better.

Here the young people critically reflect on perceived unfair practices that could occur if an exclusive sample of people were involved in a public discussion, revealing attitudes and suspicions over current democratic processes.

The conflicts and contradictions described above highlight the complexity of participatory approaches and the differing preferences that different members of communities are likely to hold. They do, however, also highlight that communities that do not necessarily engage well in traditional democratic processes, such as voting, understand the pros and cons of different approaches and their implications.

Enabling a public space for residents to engage in discussions with the Council (be it with elected members and/or officers) would help to overcome barriers regarding access to accurate information. The workshops revealed most residents access their news from social media and often miss official Council press releases. An open forum style approach would help residents to feel heard and provide a means to share information in a way that is easy for residents to understand, providing the opportunity to question and ensure clarity.

Co-Production (Implementation)

Co-production proposes that "citizens can play an active role in producing public goods and services of consequence to them...[where] inputs from individuals who are not in the same organisation are transformed into good or services (Ostrom, 1996, p. 1073). Residents across all groups felt that co-production should be at the heart of the development and delivery of services used by community members. The rationale for favouring a co-productive approach rested in the belief that people are experts in their own lives, as summarised below:

Yes, I agree with that because they'll know what they're going through (May, retired grandmother)

It was felt that this could most effectively be done by the Council attending existing groups and working with those with lived experiences to design services. One participant

suggested the Council introduce a 'co-production bus', that could 'tour' different services across Cumberland using a roadshow-style approach. Here, the Council would conduct an analysis of all services existing in Cumberland around a specific issue (such as young people with autism), and the bus could visit every group in the area, inviting service users to be involved in developing relevant supportive services.

Developing our approach

Method: Co-Production

How often should we to meet?

Once	When some a problem come up that we want to tackle (reactive)
When we have a good idea we want to share	Regularly (proactive)

Why is this the best way?

IT IS RUN BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE EXPERIENCE OR BACKGROUND OF THE RELEVANT CONDITION.

University of Central Lancashire UCLan

Where opportunity creates success

Monitor Session Three 05.11.22

Where should we meet?

In the community (like Moorclose Community Centre)?	Somewhere central (like the Carnegie Theatre)?	Council offices?
Online?	Mixture?	Other ideas?

Why is this the best way?

ROADSHOW

University of Central Lancashire UCLan

Where opportunity creates success

Monitor Session Three 05.11.22

A significant proportion of the residents involved in this research were themselves users of a service, particularly around health and wellbeing. This included people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and people accessing some form of psychological or emotional support. Residents also spoke of their contact with social and welfare services. The importance of investing time in building these relationships and using different methods and materials to engage people with different needs was stressed.

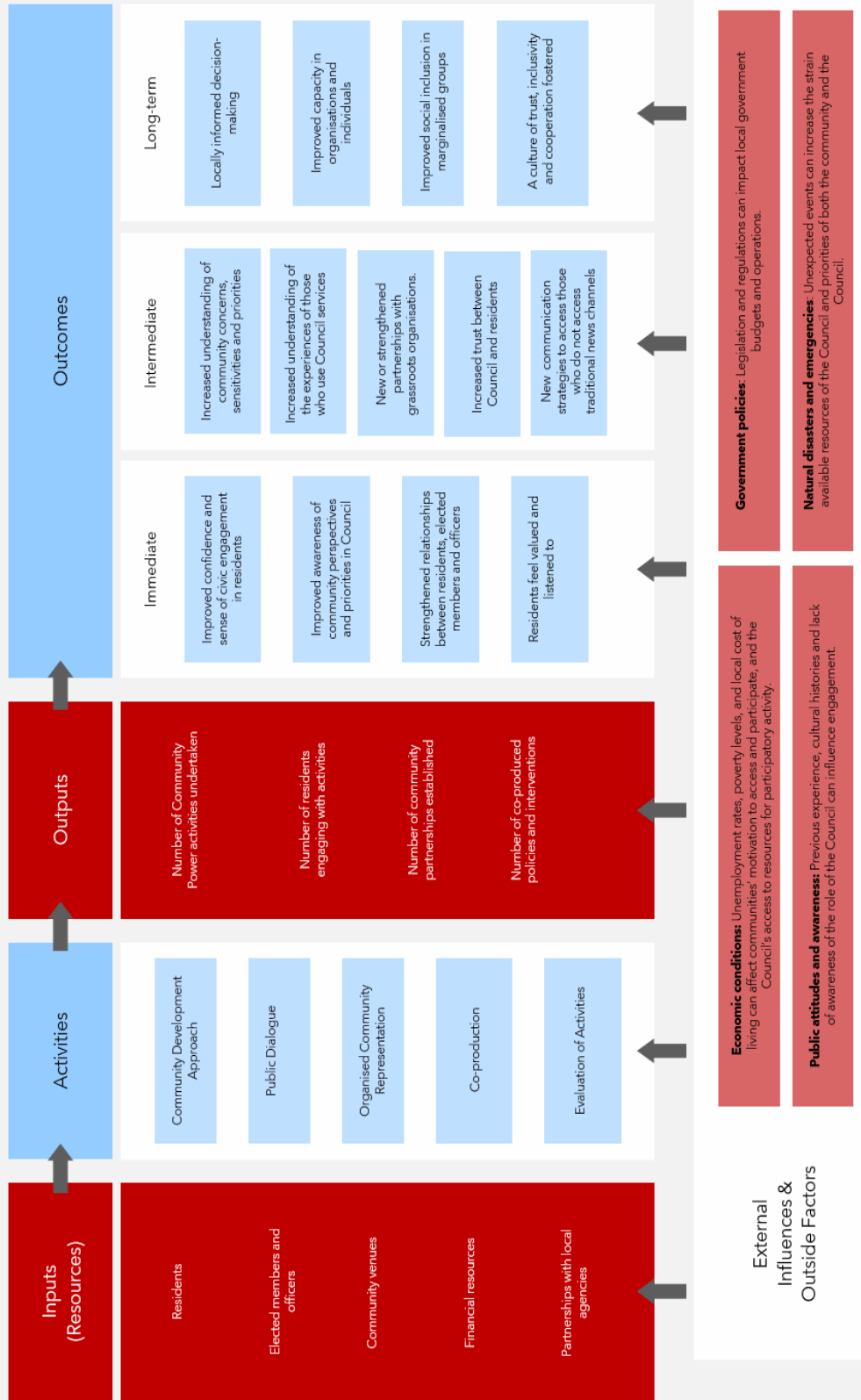
Throughout the workshops, a narrative suggested that communities feel 'done to' by the local and central government and wish to be part of the journey to making the community a better place, especially for those in most need of support. The quote below is with reference to a newly introduced traffic scheme, illustrating how communities resent services and initiatives being designed by people with little or no knowledge of the issue in question:

It's always done by somebody who doesn't live here, who doesn't know how we work as a community. They can do as many traffic surveys as they want, but we've got all those log wagons... I just think it's not going to work (Janet, community centre volunteer)

Introducing a culture of co-production within the Council has the potential to challenge this viewpoint, fostering a new narrative around inclusivity and cooperation. Framed this way, co-production could be viewed as a tool for informing policy and practice and also providing secondary benefits in developing skills and capacities in individuals and organisations, thereby promoting social inclusion. Another secondary benefit of feeling heard and valued is the potential positive impact on confidence, sense of belonging and self-esteem. Furthermore, developing interventions including those with lived experience brings an acute awareness of the needs and concerns of service users.

These four areas for participation are presented in a theory of change logic model. Here, the inputs required are set out, followed by an outline of the potential outputs and outcomes of such participatory activities. It is hoped that the model provides an accessible framework to understand and implement the ways communities would like to work with the Council.

Community Power: Theory of Change Logic Model



Factors that influence participation

General principles concerning barriers and enablers to participation were discussed by communities, along with some strategies explicitly being noted to avoid.

Barriers to participation

As alluded to throughout this report, there is a narrative within communities around a lack of trust in the Council or faith in their voices being heard. This can, and has, resulted in an apparent disengagement in local democracy:

They'll sit at home and just think, 'I'll just leave it to them, they'll do it'. So it just kind of almost becomes, they'll do it. When in fact it's everybody's role, isn't it? (Jane)

Many residents expressed concerns about the centralisation of the democratic process with the emergence of the new Council, with residents worrying that the focus of the Council would be on Carlisle and the surrounding area. This concern was not only related to issues around local funding but to those concerning public transport and ensuring residents would be able to access opportunities to engage in the democratic process.

There was a lack of awareness relate to the different functions of councils and confusion over the roles of the new unitary authority and town councils. There was also a lack of awareness concerning decision-making processes within the councils, which impacted on the residents' perceptions of the accountability and transparency of the Council. This unfamiliarity with the functions and processes may contribute to the hesitancy to engage in more formal means of participatory democracy.

Enablers to participation

A community-based, informal, friendly approach is essential in engaging communities in the democratic process. It was felt that such an approach would help to overcome the barriers discussed above, acting as a hook to attract people, as is summarised below initially:

May	Free food.
Janet	Once they're coming-
Meline	They know what it's about.
May	And if they know the people in here are friendly.

The friendliness of those present requires significant consideration and relates to how residents perceive their relationship with the Council, elected members in particular. One resident who volunteered locally reflected on how effective a previous community engagement approach was in reaching seldom-heard groups:

Andrea:	I think it's, because we weren't with a big councillor badge and everything, rosettes on our chest, we were just normal people.
Stuart:	And that's what they want. We don't want suits, that's what we don't want.

In addition to creating a friendly space, a positive, proactive approach was felt to encourage participation:

A lot of positivity needs to be created around it to get people to think, 'oh well actually, this is something I could possibly do'.

A positive, proactive approach could potentially challenge the disengagement seen in communities and provide opportunities for residents to take part in democratic processes that they have never previously engaged with, which, in turn, would build their own capacity. Young people were mindful of the importance of a bespoke and inclusive promotional strategy to ensure that all members of the community were informed about any approach to engage in the democratic process. Suggestions included traditional postal and social media methods and more innovative ideas such as touring cars with megaphones.

Participatory Approaches to Avoid

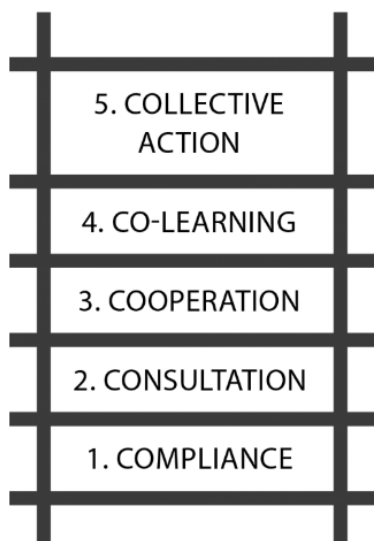
Approaches that communities felt least comfortable using were surveys, voting and the use of participatory videos. Surveys are a popular tool for collecting information from large populations and can be administered online or on paper. However, surveys were unanimously rejected by young people, being seen as something formal and closely related to school and schoolwork. Although young people in one group supported the idea of consensus voting, believing that every person in their community should have a right to vote on decisions that impact on them, this idea was strongly rejected by both adult groups.

Summary

Residents were keen to explore a community development approach with the Council, consisting of informal, family-focused community events organised between community organisations, residents and the Council. Residents expressed interest in community representation in formal Council meetings but could not reach an agreed recruitment method for this representation. Opportunities for public dialogue would be welcomed by residents, providing a space for the public and the Council to engage in public discussions around a given issue. Finally, co-production was a popular method for involving residents in services that impact on their lives, particularly relating to health and wellbeing. Before any form of democratic participation is introduced within Cumberland Council, it is essential for officers and elected to take the time to foster trusting relationships.

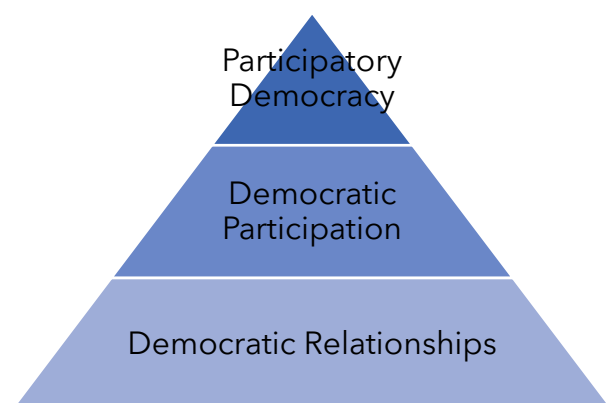
PART THREE: UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION FROM A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The research initially hoped to co-create innovative methods of participatory democracy with communities. However, the community workshops revealed that communities sought a relational form of participation, where they were part of the journey with the council rather than having authoritative or decision-making power. Bringing the residents and policy actors together for the co-creation workshops showed that, in some cases, relationships between the residents and some elected members are not in a position to explore such forms of relational working.



Given these challenges, it is useful to reflect on different levels of democratic participation. Numerous models of participation are available. For example, Kanji and Greenwood (2001) can be seen below as presenting a ladder with numerous stages of participation, each including larger degrees of participation. Whilst these models acknowledge the differing forms of relationships with each stage, These models tend to focus on the processes that take place. The findings from the Community Power research suggests that relationships should be central to any forms of political engagement between communities and policy actors, resonating with a growing body research (Agranoff, 2008; Bartles 2018; Bartels, 2016; Bartles and Turnbull, 2020; Dodson, 2005; IPPR, 2012; Medina-Guce, 2020; Selg & Ventsel 2020; Stears, 2012, Stears & King, 2011).

The learning from the Community Power research lends itself to understanding participation from the perspective of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Here, democratic relationships are the fundamental basis upon which any other forms of participation can take place. Here, the emotional connections between people with diverse experiences must be acknowledged, along with their background and interests, (IPPR, 2012, p. 40). This is followed by democratic participation, where communities feel willing to work with existing structures, such as voting, and deliberate with the Council on issues that impact on their lives. Finally, is participatory democracy, where communities seek power and control through formal mechanism such as citizens assemblies, juries or mini publics (Pateman, 2012). This model shows that trusting relationships are the bedrock of any participatory approach, and in order to develop participation in Cumberland, fundamental work needs to take place to build strong relational foundations. In order to do this effectively, it is critical to understand relationships from the perceptions of the community, which will be the focus of the next section.



Relational Theory, Political Participation and Policy

Limited literature covers community engagement, relational theory and political participation. However, Bartles and Turnbull, present a heuristic classification of relational approaches to public policy administration (Bartles and Turnbull, 2020), with four different categories outlining different ways in which relationships can operate:

	Instrumental-strategic	Critical Reflexive
Individualist	<p>Connected Actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative actors are always connected street level • Street level bureaucracy • Co-production • A relationship to achieve a goal 	<p>Interactive Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on including and empowering public participation • Create new relationships of mutual understanding, trust and collaboration • Participatory democracy: co-creation of value-based policy
Holist	<p>Co-Creation Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship is more than the sum of its parts • The efficiency that can be achieved through working together 	<p>Dynamic Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims at uncovering forces of power • Interpretive policy analysis- the relational construction of meaning to demonstrate how policy processes and outcomes take shape through interactions

Similar research conducted in the Netherlands stressed the importance of relational, collaborative networks that generate “connective human capital” (Agranoff, 2008, p. 320), which can lead to developing a joint practice and shared understanding of the challenges communities face (Bartles, 2018). This research also encountered challenges similar to those faced in Community Power concerning resistance to changing working practices from political actors in local government, and this inhibited sustainable change from being made on an institutional level. Bartles calls for collaborative networks to be grounded in the development and implementation of policy and argues that “future research should examine collaborative dynamics in street-level work in other contexts and different approaches to improving their processes and outcomes” (Bartles, 2018, p. 1332).

The four ways of working that residents developed tell us a number of things about the ways in which they seek to engage with local democracy. Residents seek to work dialogically, with those with shared values around reciprocity. There is a desire to build trusting and equitable relationships where residents can become informed actors. Residents do not necessarily want to be involved in structural or formal decision-making processes, nor do they wish to overturn traditional power structures. Rather, they seek a physical and symbolic space in which power is distributed equally and residents' views, concerns and preferences are considered as legitimate as those of the Council.

Reflecting on these findings in relation to Bartles and Turnbull’s heuristic classification of relational approaches to public policy administration (Bartles and Turnbull, 2020), we can see that an instrumental-strategic epistemology is best situated when working with the communities involved in this research, where the focus is on processes and fulfilling specific tasks, rather than challenging traditional power structures. Furthermore, it would appear that an individualist approach, rather than a holist approach, is most valued by residents and focused on the specific roles and actions of individuals. Street-level practices are of central importance to residents, who seek to see policy being implemented in practice in order to understand how it improves their lives and those

around them. Considering the application of these findings, it could be argued that the type of relational approach to public administration communities' desire falls within the 'connected actors' category, with approaches of significance being co-production and street-level bureaucracy.

A caveat must be made when making these arguments, however. It could be argued that residents in LBP do not seek to challenge traditional democratic structures and gain participatory democratic power due to a taken-for-granted assumption of their social and political position, that is, one without power. A separate analysis of the Community Power research suggests that although residents are consciously aware of differing power structures, they accept their position as one that does not encompass any authority for official decision-making (Wilson, 2024).

Fostering Democratic Relationships in Community-Council Partnerships

Another key aspect of the research was to understand the opportunities and barriers to building positive relationships between the Council and communities. Four categories have been generated around relationships, all of which are equally important and interdependent. This analysis draws on data from a number of focused exercises and discussions around relationships with local authorities in Cumbria (including town councils, Allerdale and Copeland Borough Council's and Cumbria County Council). For simplicity, these will be referred to collectively as the Council throughout the report.

Accessible and Equal Spaces

A space to be heard

Overwhelmingly all community groups cited that one of their main desires was to have a relationship with the Council where they felt heard. There was a consistent narrative of feeling unheard under the current system, and this impacts on residents' motivations to become involved in consultations or any other participatory opportunities, *"We've already decided that we're not being listened to. So, they don't get the uptake because people are like, well what's the point?" (Deborah)*. This experience of learned helplessness was understood to be the reason behind poor voting turnout at elections and a general distrust and disengagement in local and national politics.

Adult residents provided accounts of where they had participated in public consultation events but did not feel their views were adequately accounted for, *"They sort of listened to what people had to say but you knew it wasn't going to make any difference" (May)*. May's account suggests that some residents who do actually participate in local consultations do so with the pre-existing assumption that they will not be listened to, which may influence how residents interact with those conducting the consultations.

Young residents were not able to provide examples of trying to communicate with the local authorities but there was a strong narrative centred around not being heard:

Laura: I think people don't listen because they just can't.
Q: Because they just can't?
Laura: Do you think they want to listen?
Sophie: Not really, no.

When asked, most young residents said their understanding of the Council was influenced primarily by their parents, providing an example of how the intergenerational transmission of disengagement and distrust in politics can occur, mainly through discussion about current affairs. Young people were more able to draw on encounters with other authority figures such as the police and teachers, where they too spoke of feeling unheard.

When exploring opportunities for participatory democracy (such as participatory strategic planning), adult residents were unsure how this would be embraced and followed through by the Council:

Arthur: Would it work after you've told them?
Elaine: You could always speak, yes.
Andrea: It's worth a try, yes.
Elaine: Whether they'd listen.

This was a concurrent theme throughout the research, with the above passage providing an example of both the residents' interest and willingness to work with the Council, but scepticism about how willing the Council would be to listen and adopt new ways of working.

Both young and adult residents alike wanted to speak to "*actual people*" (*Laura*) face to face, in their community where they are comfortable. It was felt that in order to be heard, the person to whom they would be speaking to is crucial, that it needs to be someone familiar with the community and "*someone who knows what's going on*" (*Joseph*). This view is informed by past experiences whereby residents have felt that representatives from the Council have made policy decisions with little understanding of the areas it would impact on.

Accessible language and communication channels

Residents felt that language can be a barrier to communication, with the use of jargon impacting on people's confidence to speak to local councillors:

I think sometimes that's a barrier because you can have all the feelings and wanting change in your community, but if you've got, let's say an arrogant man in front of you that's reading all these policies and spouting all this, you're just going to think, well what's the point. I'm not going to get my point across, I can't compete with that
(*Jane*)

Here, Jane suggests that there is a motivation to make a change in the community but feels that institutional tools, such as policies and jargon are used to prevent residents from engaging in dialogue and debate, adding to the perception of being unheard. Jane's example of an "arrogant man" indicates assumptions surrounding the gender and personality of people who are associated with the local authorities, which relate to traditional patriarchal power structures. Feeling unable to "compete", Jane suggests that she perceives the Council as an opposing body, indicating a fundamental conflict in relation to the needs of the community.

Residents said they wished to interact with someone who would be on their "*level... It's got to take all that jargon out, remove all that waffle*" (*Janet*). Seeking to be on an equal level demonstrates a desire for equality and describing jargon as "waffle" shows that such language is of little value to residents. Indeed, another resident suggested that the

Council should “*Talk normal. Don’t sit there and think that you’re better than me because you’re not*” (Jane). Here Jane shows that much of the language used in policy is not within the frame of reference of many residents and does not relate to everyone’s daily lives. The passage also reveals a perception of assumed superiority by the Council, again providing an example of how residents perceive the local authorities as exerting power over communities.

Concerns with access to accurate information were also highlighted by Jane, who had an awareness of how to access information and a drive to do so:

Some of Council’s agendas and minutes do get put online. I think the last time I checked, the minutes of all the meetings were about three years out of date. So there’s no transparency and they don’t keep up with things I know the Council have got a Facebook page but it’s very select what they share on there.

Here Jane shows concerns about a lack of transparency and accountability by the local authorities in not publishing up-to-date information and being selective about the information they share on social media. This may suggest the Council as being seen as gatekeepers of information and wielding their power by not sharing information they are obliged to, such as meeting minutes.

Accessibility was further explored when discussing the use of online spaces. There was a generational split on the types of forums where people would like to say or interact with the local authorities, with younger residents favouring of online methods, such as WhatsApp. However, younger adult residents and young residents often discussed the need for hybrid approaches that would include everyone. Suggestions around social media platforms such as WhatsApp present a shift from the impersonal traditional online engagement strategies, such as online consultations on websites, towards a more dialogical interaction. The benefits of such online spaces were noted to be important as previous consultations were reported to have been held “*through the day, when the majority of people are at work, so they couldn’t access it...there was nothing online*”. (Jane). These accounts suggest the importance of multiple strategies, with physical and virtual spaces being available at different times.

Opportunities to challenge

Both groups of adult residents provided examples of challenging an elected representative (MP or Councillor) on social media and had been blocked from their accounts. The below conversation with two women in their twenties sharing their experiences:

Brooke: He’s that much of a good councillor he’s blocked the people that speak, me.
Q: So is that on Facebook?
Chloe: And me, I’m blocked off.
Q: Because you’ve spoken up against him?
Chloe: Yes.
Brooke: They don’t like our opinions.
Q: How did that make you feel?
Brooke: I also noticed, when I was looking through his, not just me, with a few of them.

Here, Brooke shows dissatisfaction that the elected member is not fulfilling his role because he is not being accountable and that on further investigation this is standard

practice. Another resident felt this to compromise any potential relationships through not facilitating interaction, "*He's blocked me on Facebook, so I haven't got a good relationship with him*" (Jane). In all cases, residents described their contributions to the online dialogue as challenging a decision they disagreed with. The nature of the challenge is unknown (in language, tone etc), so it is difficult to know the true reason why the residents were blocked. However, the fact that residents from both adult groups commented on this warrants some consideration.

Equitable space for dialogue

Some adult residents could provide examples of when they had approached the Council to voice concerns or participate in decision-making. The example below relates to an incident when a group of older gentlemen challenged the Council on an issue relating to the use of a local council owned allotment:

I had an allotment and the council said we'd have a meeting. There was quite a few of us went to the meeting and there was more councillors and they all said, you've got ten minutes to talk. And one of the lads done all the talking for us, then they started talking and they talked for nearly an hour. And what we got off them was no answers of anything. All they wanted to do is just to show that they were in charge (Arthur)

Within this passage, there is a common use of 'they' when referring to the Council. This implies distinct social identities and a perception of 'us vs them', emphasising a conflicting relationship where the Council are asserting their dominance over residents. There was an unequal allocation of power within the meeting, which left residents feeling dissatisfied and unheard.

A consistent message in the accounts above revolves around unequal power distribution relating to dialogical spaces. This has clear implications for social inclusion, in that it is felt that accessible and equal spaces to participate are not available.

Respect and Equality

All community groups spoke of how they sought to be treated with respect, based on notions of equality, humility and an open-mindedness that gives views of all residents equal legitimacy.

Humility

The most dominant narrative regarding respect and equality relates to humility, or the perceived lack of it, shown by members of the local authorities. When one group of young residents completed an exercise to 'build their own MP' attributes around humility were most frequently cited as being the traits they sought in an elected leader. A narrative around assumed superiority ("*I'm a councillor, who are you type of thing*", Stuart) was present within both adult resident groups, using encounters to describe a perceived lack of humility. For example, here Joseph described how the behaviour of a newly elected member changed once they were voted into office.

As soon as they become a councillor, 'do you know who I am?' Yes, you're still young, you're just a councillor and you're supposed to be the voice of the local people, but clearly not because all of a sudden you think you're special (Joseph)

Here, Joseph is reflecting on a perceived power inequality, whereby being in office is associated with an assumed superiority on behalf of the elected member, which was attributed to a change in character in the newly elected member. The shift in the status of newly elected members is met with resentment, particularly since the role of the elected is to be the “*voice of the people*” (Joseph), which is not felt to be honoured (“*You work for us*”, Andrea). This sentiment was echoed by some young residents:

Laura: But these are actually chosen to be part of a council, how ridiculous, and just overall snobs.

Q: Snobs? And why would you say snobs? That’s an interesting word.

Laura: The council just looks down at everyone, the entire council are snobs.

This passage reveals much about how Laura understands the local political system. Firstly, it shows a lack of faith in the current voting system in expressing how “ridiculous” it is to be “chosen” to sit in office. It also reveals a determinative perspective, applying ‘snobbish’ attributes to the “entire council”. Laura has had little contact with members of her local authority, and these views, she tells us, are influenced by conversations with her parents, who are dissatisfied with the local authorities. It illustrates how the intergenerational transmission of attitudes and beliefs can occur, resulting in an unquestioning attitude.

Open-minded

Residents sought a relationship with the Council whereby they could work collaboratively, with an equal status. This sentiment is captured in the passage below:

Simon: We could liaise with them, work with the councillors as an equal member.

Joseph: Yes, if it was an equal member.

Simon: If you were treated equal it’s a good idea but I don’t think they would.

Here, Joseph and Simon agree that they would like to ‘liaise’ with the Council, implying a relationship defined by congeniality and equality. However, Simon concludes by sharing his disbelief that this would happen, which is consistent with the narrative around distrust towards local politicians.

Residents felt that being open-minded included “*not taking offence when they get a little bit of criticism*” (Brooke), (evidenced by blocking residents on social media), and providing a space where open and frank discussions could take place. Both young and adult groups sought to have their views accepted as being equally legitimate as those of the Council. This was not felt to be currently the case, as was summarised by one resident:

You don’t know if they’re just humouring you, to say what you want to keep you quiet. Nine times out of ten they won’t do anything with what you’ve said, they’ve just let you in to humour you, so you feel like they’re doing something. (Trish)

Accountability and Transparency

All community groups presented a narrative of distrust towards the Council. This accepted stereotype of politicians was generalised and deterministic in outlook (“*They’re never going to tell you the truth*”, May). More than anything, residents seek honesty, particularly when things do not work out as planned (“*don’t sugar coat it, be honest and tell you*”, May). There was little trust in the ways in which the Council made decisions, with residents presenting three dominant narratives; “nothing gets done”, “they’d already made their minds up” and “they don’t care about us at all”. The source of these narratives, and their impact, is considered in turn.

"Nothing gets done"

When discussing the new Cumberland Council Plan, one group of adult residents were reluctant even to open the document:

May: Well to be honest even to read that, nobody's going to believe it because they never do what they say they're going to do.

Jane: They promise you the world and say that they're going to, they'll feed that back and they'll feed this back and they'll do this and they'll do that, but it never happens.

The discussion above outlines a historical feeling of being let down, of being promised actions which were felt never to transpire. This collective memory then impacts on how future interactions are anticipated, with a reluctance to be receptive of new policies or initiatives. The motivations for these 'false promises' was attributed to elected members seeking to gain votes from the community (*"oh I'm going to show this and I'm going to show that, and that's just to get your votes"*, May). This narrative relates to another dominant theme within the research of feeling used by elected members, further adding to the perception of being powerless.

"They'd already made their minds up"

There was a significant narrative amongst both adult resident groups that council decisions are predetermined, with any consultation being tokenistic (to appease the community) and for promotional purposes (*"they just ask us for publicity"*, Elaine). In exploring the roots of this narrative (the phrase was used five times throughout the sessions), residents described a lack of awareness of how decisions are made and added that they felt this was a deliberate tactic to exclude residents in decision-making, as Janet alludes to, *"They're not very inclusive and there's no transparency. It's all, like you say, cloak and dagger, isn't it? And you'll find out what's happening after it's happened"* (Janet). When asked what evidence residents base this assumption on, the dominant response was *"you always think it anyway"* (May), suggesting this is a socially constructed narrative. There are examples of when communities attempted to exert some community power and influence policy decisions, many of which were unsuccessful, for example, when Ewanrigg campaigned to keep the local cottage hospital open.

"They don't care about us at all"

These experiences inform the attitude that the Council do not care about communities. A number of adult residents said that the Council don't *"give a shit"* (Celia, Joseph) about their community, and it was widely felt that *"they don't care about us at all"* (Elaine). These accounts all relate to a feeling of powerlessness, where decisions are made, that impact on their lives without any consideration of the consequences for the community. Trish summarised this sentiment when proposing that the Council's attitude toward investment and the social infrastructure of her community was *"we'll just take it away, it doesn't matter"* (Trish).

Commitment to the Community

Residents sought to build relationships with people who shared their values, embedded in a deep commitment to the wellbeing of the Council. This commitment was seen through enacting a sense of civic duty by providing practical support to residents and responding to the community's needs.

Civic Duty and Reciprocity

Adult residents provided numerous accounts of elected members who they felt acted in the interests of the community, which included offering practical support at public community events and also responding to individual requests for support. Examples of community support include helping with community dinners, where members worked without wanting anything in return:

Melanie: And he'll stand and work.

Janet: All day, won't have dinner. He's in the kitchen all day washing dishes.

Here Melanie and Janet suggest that selflessness, reciprocity and civic duty are highly valued. These sentiments are echoed in the example below:

Joseph: The only one who does actually take any time with [the young people with learning difficulties] is [elected member]

Chloe: Yes.

Joseph: When he comes in he'll sit here for ages cracking away with them.

Chloe: He'll bring the dog and everything for us.

Joseph: The rest of them, they like to put their name to the community centre and say, we've helped to do this, oh look what we've achieved.

Chloe: [Elected member] gets us donations and that though as well, doesn't he?

Joseph: Yes, he's the only one.

Chloe: But he doesn't shout it from the rooftops.

This elected member is seen to offer an informal and personal approach by bringing his dog to spend time with young people with learning difficulties, which is perceived as being selfless as it is not used as a tool for self-promotion on social media.

Reliable and responsive

Residents provided examples seeking help from a trusted elected member and cited reliability and responsiveness of traits that were of great value:

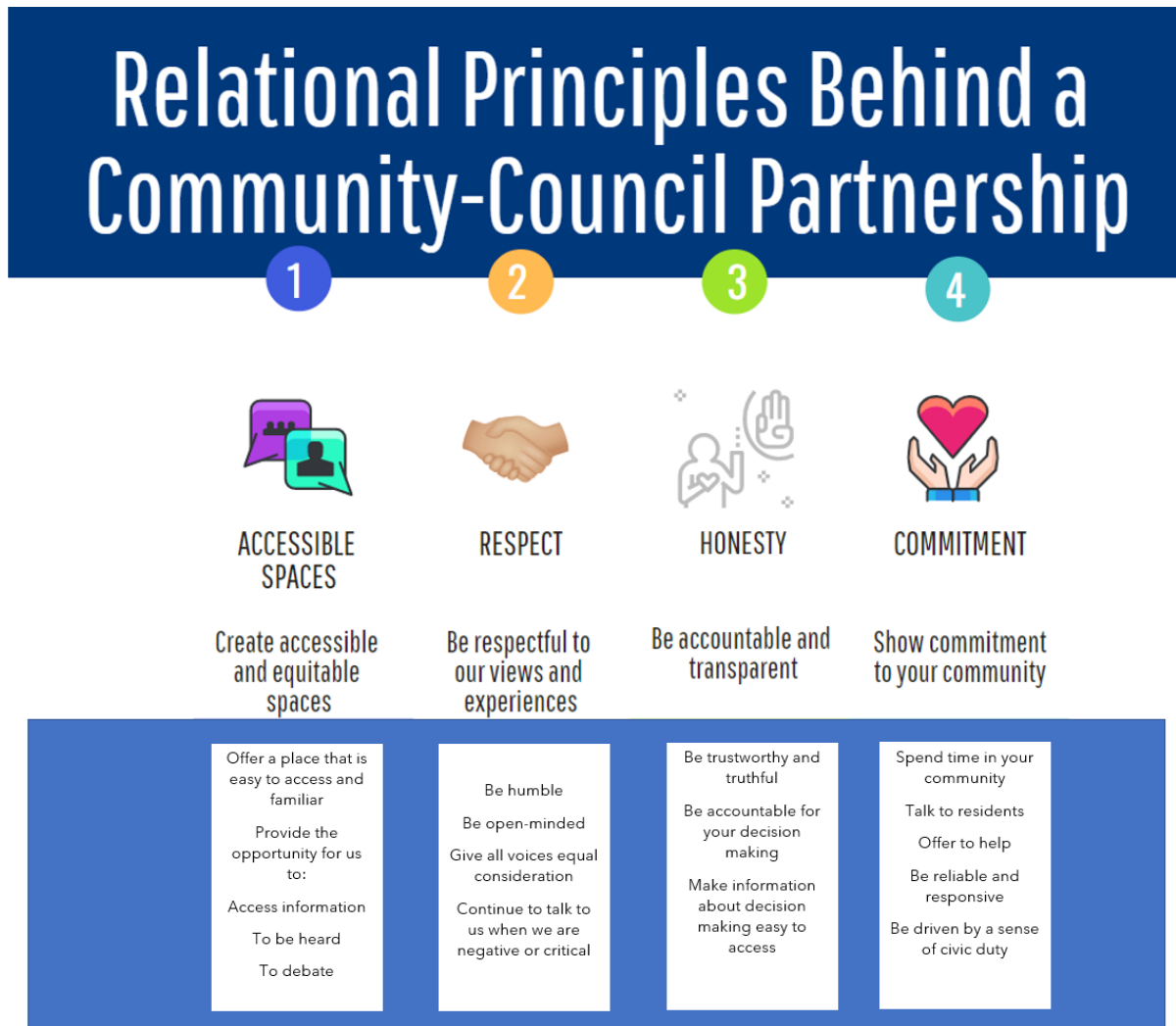
May: I phoned [elected member] because I was struggling getting a passport. You ask him to do something, done, done.

Janet: That's the kind of person you want though, don't you? You want somebody that's going to help you, not hinder you.

Being approachable and accessible (through attending meetings or being available on the phone) was felt to help facilitate this supportive process, along with listening and being reliable (*"If you had a problem and you tell him, he would listen and he would help you sort that problem out", Claire*).

Relational Principles Behind a Community-Council Partnership

The accounts provided by residents show that relationships are critical in working with communities. Relationships revolve around interactions and “have a history of past and an expectation of future interaction and this shapes their current interaction” (Crossley, 2011, p.28). Interactions impact on relationships, “transform[ing] the way in which [actors] act, feel and think” towards other people (Crossley, 2011, p.30). Drawing on the accounts provided by residents, four relational principles have been developed to inform interactions between communities and the local authorities moving forward.



The principles presented above have been shared and critically discussed with a number of policy actors. Consensus was reached that these principles were valid, but several policy actors wanted to ensure that these were reciprocal principles, where elected members and council officers were also treated with respect. This highlights the importance of reciprocity in building relationships.

The author appreciates that the recommendations may reflect the Council’s current practice and that they resonate closely with the values described in the Cumberland Plan (Cumberland Council, 2023). This relational framework, emerging from in-depth, impartial research can be used to both validate and challenge current practice.

PART FOUR: TURNING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

Outcomes

The publication of this report swiftly follows the completion of the research and therefore the outcomes are still emerging. However, a number of immediate outcomes have already been observed on individual, community and policy levels. On an individual level, residents felt empowered and educated to speak out, with one resident simply saying:

“you’ve given me firepower”

Accounts from young residents show how the research experience made them feel heard and validated, and many spoke with pride about the work they had done in the project. One young person commented that:

“being able to like speak up instead of like, because you don’t really get to speak up in the school and like anywhere else.”

Another young person reflected on this involvement in the project has developed his skills and awareness of politics:

“I feel like it’s almost preparing us for the real world because in the real world you’re always going to have to have a say in something. Obviously, we’re going to have to start voting and stuff like that eventually, so it’s just preparing us for that”.

These outcomes show the immediate impact of being involved in a process where residents feel heard, developing confidence and knowledge, which can be understood as individual capacity.

Bringing communities and policy actors together in an inclusive space created opportunities for dialogue. Residents could ask policy actors questions about issues affecting them, such as bin strikes, which increased their understanding of the processes within the Council and the challenges they face. These conversations identified the communication strategies used by the Council that could be improved upon in reaching residents and new methods of communicating with residents are being developed. In one community this is through a local newsletter, another through word of mouth and being more visible at the local community centre.

On a community level, new networks were established between community organisations and the Council, which have already resulted in increased community capacity in the form of additional funding and further networking opportunities. These new connections have also provided young people with different mediums to express their concerns. For example, Bobby Forbes (Member of Youth Parliament for Cumberland), with some of the young people attending Shackles Off in Millom. They expressed a wish to have their voices heard on projects in town, such as future funding and spending planning, and development of facilities for young people. Bobby filmed and publicly posted a request to the Town Council,³ which has received a response asking for Bobby and the young

³ Bobby’s video can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/ZMQGfiF0L7E?si=0lyvloJxdzmYQFdo>

people from Shackles Off to meet with councillors to find a way forward in communicating effectively and working together.

On a policy level, the research is contributing to the developing culture of participation within Cumberland Council, with the involvement of the elected members in this research serving as role models of best practices in community engagement. The findings provided supportive evidence for adopting Community Network and have been used to inform engagement strategies in the communities involved in this research. Furthermore, results have been used in developing Cumberland Council's new Customer Empowerment Strategy

Anticipated outcomes

There are also a number of anticipated outputs associated with the Community Power research. Through being involved in local decision-making, residents will feel listened to and valued. Being involved in the process, in whatever form it may take, will build capacity in individuals and promote social inclusion in marginalised groups. Closer working relationships with grassroots organisations can also help to build their capacity.

As set out in the theory of change logic model, embracing the participatory activities co-designed by communities could bring numerous beneficial outcomes for the Council. These include gaining a breadth of information about community concerns and priorities along with detailed insight into the sensitivities within a given community. These approaches would provide the Council with the opportunity to share accurate information with groups who do not access traditional news channels and also to gain insight into the experiences of those who use Council services.

It is also anticipated that the findings will be used to inform a number of local policy developments, including:

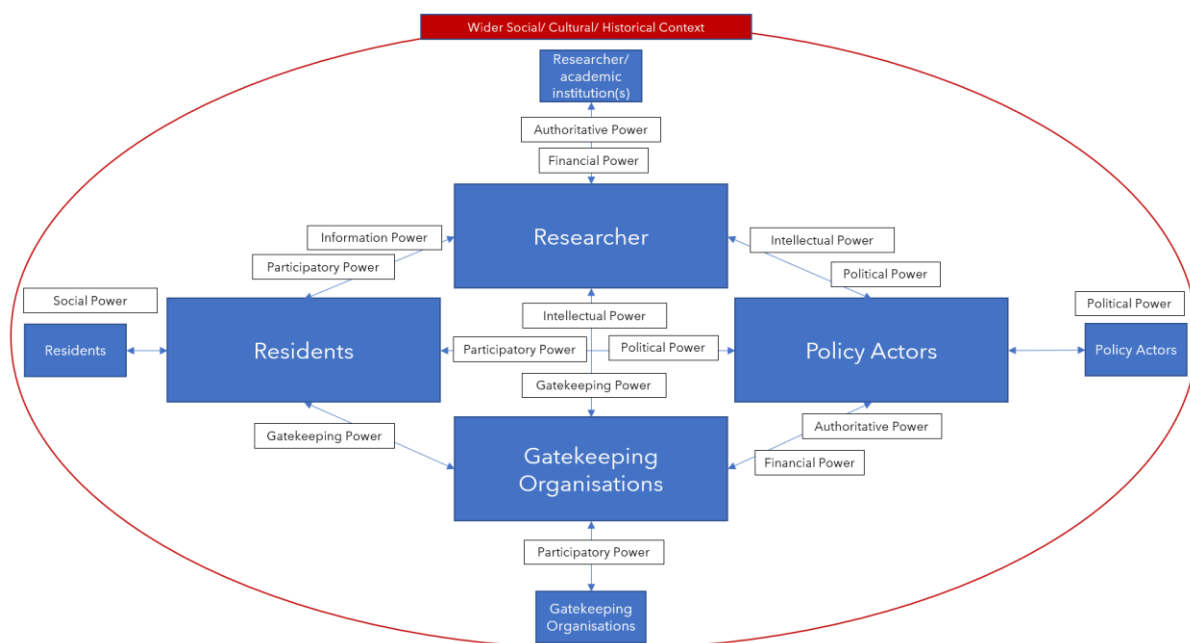
1. The overall relational framework will be considered as providing the foundation for developing collaborative and respectful practices between communities and the Council. This will be applied to the forthcoming community engagement research between the Council, the University of Cumbria and UCLan, focusing on evidence-based policy development.
2. Specific work with a small group of young adults with learning difficulties resulted in the co-creation of a framework for engagement and participation with young adults with learning difficulties. This framework will be presented to the Council for consideration within SEND and adult social services policy (see Appendix D for the Framework for Community Engagement and Participation).

The overarching vision of this work is for a culture of authentic community participation to thrive in the Council, characterised by positive relationships, locally informed decision-making and improved social inclusion in low-income coastal communities.

Responding to Resistance by Understanding Power Dynamics

Physical communities are complex, as are councils, which could also be considered a community. Both have strong cultural histories and can stir strong emotions in those who belong to such communities. The formation of Cumberland Council and subsequent reforms that have since accompanied it have resulted in significant changes in the culture and practices of this council. As in many walks of life, change can be met with resistance; new ways of working may feel unfamiliar and threatening to officers and elected members, and the community may be fearful of change due to previous negative experiences.

An understanding of the reasons behind resistance is key in developing strategies to overcome them, and often, power dynamics can be the central cause of resistance. The Community Power saw a vast array of different power dynamics, which may provide a useful framework for understanding and responding to challenges in the future. The figure below provides a reflective framework of the power dynamics operating in the Community Power research, all acting within a wider social, cultural and historical context.



PAR seeks to challenge existing inequalities by working with marginalised populations to overcome some form of power inequality. As researchers, we must be cognisant of our implicit privilege in terms of social positioning and subsequent power positioning. This is the foundation of being a reflexive researcher, where we strive to “maintain transparency about our own positionality and be reflexive over the research process” (Bartles & Wittmater, 2020, p. 22). The role of the academic institution and the research is presented to acknowledge the implicit status and power that is often associated with HE. These potential assumptions were consciously recognised and reflected on throughout the research, and it is hoped that UCLan and the researcher were perceived as equal partners throughout. In order to ensure intellectual power was evenly distributed, copies of the

report were shared with all stakeholders involved in the research. This invited feedback and provided opportunities for questions, comments and challenges.

Some forms of power present in the research were unique to the research context, others more ubiquitous. Examples from each form of power are provided below:

Authoritative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy actors have the power to enforce policies and practices onto the ways in which gatekeeping organisations work. • Academic institutions have set policies and procedures which the researcher must adhere to.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy actors have power over policies that impact on the lives of residents. • Different policy actors may have different policy preferences, which may cause conflict. • Different policy actors have different positions of power, which may cause conflict. • Policy actors have control over how they use the results of the research to inform policy.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic institute provide funding for research. • Policy actors provide funding for gatekeeping organisations.
Gatekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatekeeping organisations provide research access to residents • Gatekeeping organisations can control who is invited to participate in the research and who may be excluded.
Participatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents had a control over their choice to participate with the research. • Residents have control in their choice to participate with local democracy. • Management in gatekeeping organisations have control over who else in the organisation participates in research.
Intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic institutions possess a taken-for-grant expertise, where their opinions may be given more weightage than others. This includes being in a position to challenge policy actors, which others may not be able to. • The researcher, belonging to an academic institution with a taken-for-grant expertise, may be assumed to be in a superior position to gatekeeping organisations.
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents could choose what information they provided the research and in what way they shared it. • The researcher had control over how the information shared by residents was interpreted and presented to the policy actors.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents have different levels of social power and influence in their communities, manifest in many forms.

The complexities of power in community research and community engagement in general can make it difficult to devise ways to promote an equal distribution of power. However, in the interests of this research, policy actors can be understood as having tradition, authoritative power, and communities (residents and gatekeeping organisations) possessing participatory power.



By applying the relational framework presented in this report, it is hoped that communities and the council will find a way to distribute powers differently. Equally important is ensuring that internal power dynamics are recognised and addressed, which can be done using similar methods used with communities. A relational approach to participation in local governance has been advocated elsewhere, again recommending shifting power dynamics to build trust. Such an approach must include an inclusive engagement process, a responsive government administration, and the removal of political constraints and threatened civic spaces, among other relational outcomes. (Medina-Guce, 2020)

Recommendations

The recommendations presented have been deduced from the findings of the research. It is recognised that some may reflect existing values and practices in the Council, and where that is the case, it is hoped that these recommendations can support and enhance current approaches.

1. **Place-based:** The local social infrastructure plays a significant role in bringing people together in communities. It is recommended that the Council provide opportunities for residents to become involved in the democratic process in their physical community. Two effective strategies are engaging with existing community services and holding public engagement events. Both strategies would involve the Council developing strong collaborative relationships with the third sector, which could help to build trust. Both the development of Community Networks and the implementation of recruiting co-opted members into Community Panels will add to the local social infrastructure.
2. **Coproduction not consultation:** Be mindful to avoid approaches that are short, term, and focused on taking information from communities. Rather, embrace long-term, participatory processes whereby communities are positioned as active partners and contributors in the democratic process. For example, the development of the Community Networks must embed a long-term dialogue with residents rather than one-off conversations.
3. **Involve young people:** The young residents in this research provided inspiring and innovative ideas concerning community engagement and democratic participation. Most of the young people included in this study were marginalised in multiple ways, for example, experiencing poverty and having additional learning needs. Consequently, these young people are more likely to experience additional barriers in accessing participatory opportunities. Recommendations include developing a community of practice whereby opportunities to participate are included within existing services. An example of how to do this would be by Cumberland Council adopting the previous Cumbria County Council Participation Framework to embed across all departments and for anyone intending to work with young people.
4. **Communication:** Sessions revealed that residents have limited access to traditional communication strategies and information do not always reach them. Community Development Officers and elected members can work with community organisations, with embedded and effective communication strategies for each community, ensuring that key messages and opportunities for participation are reaching different groups of the community (including young people, older people and migrant residents). As advocated by residents involved in this research, this must include a combination of digital, written and verbal tools.
5. **Build relationships:** All recommendations allude to building positive relationships. This takes time and may involve adopting new practices, which may be uncomfortable or feel challenging. The findings suggest that residents are open and willing to start this process. Investing time in building positive relationships with grassroots organisations operating in communities and the residents who use them is essential. Developing approaches to participation that are ongoing can help to build these relationships. A regular presence will help to embed the Council within the community where explicit shared values can form the foundations of reciprocal power and relationships.

Concluding Comments

The approaches developed by residents tell us what is important to communities and where they see themselves in relation to the Council. The social infrastructure within communities is greatly valued; community centres and services are seen as inclusive and accessible places for residents and places where they feel they can enact a degree of power.

The workshops did, however, reveal the complex social fabric of communities, with relationships being the epicentre. As much as, collectively, there appears to be a strong sense of belonging and pride in the community, issues around trust can be seen through residents' concern over who would act as a formal representative for the community. Historical and embedded narratives impact on the perceived relationships with the Council, which affect how much trust and faith are placed in democratic processes. The ways in which the Council interact with communities, particularly responding to the challenge, also have a significant impact on community-council relationships.

Critically reflecting on the approaches chosen, it could be argued that residents seek reform in opportunities for *democratic participation*, rather than *participatory democracy*. Conversation cafés, dialogue forums and co-production provide means for communities to have some input into the policy process but suggest that they do not necessarily want to hold the power and responsibility of decision-making. The issues around representation and responsibility that arose around formal representation support this argument. That said, the residents involved in this research were passionate about the well-being of their community and welcome the opportunity to be part of the journey of the new Cumberland Council.

REFERENCES

- Agranoff, R. (2008). Enhancing performance through public sector networks: Mobilizing human capital in communities of practice. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 31(3), 320-347.
- Atkinson, R. (2009). The politics of knowing: Spatial isolation, disconnection and social withdrawal. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 91(4), 299-310.
- Avritzer, Leonardo (2002). *Democracy and the public space in Latin America*. Princeton: <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/your-council/council-documents/council-plan>
- Baiocchi, G. (2005). *Militants and citizens: The politics of participatory democracy in Porto Alegre*. Stanford University Press
- Barber, B. (2003). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. Univ of California Press.
- Bartels, K. P. (2018). Collaborative dynamics in street level work: Working in and with communities to improve relationships and reduce deprivation. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 36(7), 1319-1337.
- Bartels, K. P., & Wittmayer, J. M. (Eds.). (2020). *Action research in policy analysis: critical and relational approaches to sustainability transitions*. Routledge.
- Bartels, K., & Turnbull, N. (2020). Relational public administration: a synthesis and heuristic classification of relational approaches. *Public management review*, 22(9), 1324-1346.
- Bartels, L. M. (2016). Unequal democracy. In *Unequal Democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Boulding, C., & Wampler, B. (2010). Voice, votes, and resources: Evaluating the effect of participatory democracy on well-being. *World development*, 38(1), 125-135.
- Crossley, N. (2010). *Towards relational sociology*. Routledge: UK.
- Cumberland Council 2023-2027 (2023). *Cumberland Plan*. Available at: <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/your-council/council-documents/council-plan>
- Goldfrank, B. (2007). The politics of deepening local democracy: Decentralization, party institutionalization, and participation. *Comparative Politics*, 147-168.
- IPPR (2012). *The relational state: How recognising the importance of human relationships could revolutionise the role of the state*. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/publications/the-relational-state-how-recognising-the-importance-of-human-relationships-could-revolutionise-the-role-of-the-state> [accessed on 10.06.2022]
- Labonne, J., & Chase, R. S. (2009). Who is at the wheel when communities drive development? Evidence from the Philippines. *World Development*, 37(1), 219-231.
- Medina-Guce, C. (2020) Power and Participation. *Philippine Sociological Review*, 68, 31-54.
- Ostrom, E. (1996). Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy, and development. *World development*, 24(6), 1073-1087.
- Pateman, C. (2012). Participatory democracy revisited. *Perspectives on politics*, 10(1), 7-19.
- Pateman, C. (2012). Participatory democracy revisited. *Perspectives on politics*, 10(1), 7-19.
- Selg, P., & Ventsel, A. (2020). *Introducing relational political analysis: political semiotics as a theory and method*. Springer Nature.
- Stears M and King D (2011) 'How the US State Works: A Theory of Standardization', *Perspectives on Politics*, 9: 505-517
- Stears, M. (2012) in IPPR. *The relational state: How recognising the importance of human relationships could revolutionise the role of the state*. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/publications/the-relational-state-how-recognising-the-importance-of-human-relationships-could-revolutionise-the-role-of-the-state> [accessed on 10.06.2022]

- Wampler, B. (2007). Can participatory institutions promote pluralism? Mobilizing low-income citizens in Brazil. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 41(4), 57.
- Warren, M., (2020) "Participatory Deliberative Democracy in Complex Mass Societies", *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 16(2), p.81-88.
- Wilson, S. (2024), A 'left behind' Habitus? Understanding Local Political Disengagement Using Bourdieu.
- Wilson., S (forthcoming). Reconciling Relationality and Criticality in Policy Action Research: A Case Study in Local Democratic Participation
- Wilson, S. & Morris, D. (2020). Connected Communities Mirehouse. Available at: <https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/34921/1/UCLan%20Connected%20Communities%20Mirehouse%20Sept%202020.pdf>
- Wilson, S. & Morris, D. (2023a). Connected Communities Ormsgill. Available at: <https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/47472/1/UCLan%20Connected%20Communities%20Ormsgill.pdf>
- Wilson, S. & Morris, D. (2023b). Connected Communities Moorclose. Available at: <https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/45901/1/UCLan%20Connected%20Communities%20Moorclose%20March%202023.pdf>
- Wilson, S., Morris, D. & Williamson, E. (2020) Connected Communities Woodhouse. Available at: <https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/34922/1/UCLan%20Connected%20Communities%20Woodhouse%20Sept%202020.pdf>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Community Participant Demographics

	Ewanrigg %		Moorclose %		Allerdale*	NW*	UK*
	Sample	Ward*	Sample	Ward*			
<i>Age</i>							
- 18-25	0		11.8		7.6	9.8	9.6
- 26-35	12.5		23.5		10.9	13.4	13.5
- 36-45	12.5		11.8		10.7	11.9	12.5
- 46-55	12.5		11.8		14.6	13.4	13.5
- 56-65	12.5		0		15.9	13.7	13.5
- 66-75	50		29.4		13	10	9.8
- 76+	0		11.8		10	7.8	7.8
<i>Gender</i>							
- Male	0	48	47	47.6		49.1	49
- Female	100	52	53	52.4		50.9	51
<i>Sexuality</i>							
- Straight	100	98	94	97.2	91.8	90.1	89.4
- LGBTQ+	0	2	6	2.8	2.1	9.9	10.6
<i>Ethnicity</i>							
- White	100	99.7	100	99.3	98.6	85.6	81.7
- Other	0	0.3	0	0.7	1.4	14.4	18.3
<i>Employment Status</i>							
- Student	0	2.7	0	3	2.9	4.6	5.6
- Employed	12.5	53.2	17.7	52.2	55	55.5	57.1
- Unemployed	12.5	5	47.1	6.7	4	5.8	5.7
- Maternity	12.5	6.1	0	6	3.8	4.7	4.8
- Retired	62.5	22.9	35.3	21.2	28.2	22.2	21.6
<i>Disability</i>							
- Yes	0	24	52.9	26	20	19	18
- No	100	76	47.1	74	80	81	82

Table 1: Community Participant Demographics (*Census 2021)

Appendix B: Policy Actor Participant Demographics

Age	Gender	Role
56-65	Male	Leader of the Council
36-45	Female	Deputy Leader of the Council (statutory)
36-45	Female	Deputy Leader of the Council (non-statutory)
56-65	Female	Exec Board member
56-65	Male	Exec Board member
46-55	Female	Exec Board member
46-55	Male	Director of Health
46-55	Male	Director of Place
46-55	Male	Senior Policy Officer
46-55	Male	Senior Officer: Governance and Thriving Communities
46-55	Male	Project Manager Place Theme - LGR
46-55	Female	Senior Manager, Community Services
36-45	Female	Community Development Officer
46-55	Female	Community Development Officer
46-55	Female	Community Development Officer
36-45	Female	Community Development Officer
56-65	Female	Elected member
56-65	Male	Elected member
66-75	Female	Elected member
46-55	Male	Elected member
66-75	Male	Elected Member

Table 2: Policy Actor Participant Demographics





South Whitehaven





Millom



Community Cafe

Proactive, regular, face to face sessions in Millom town centre. Needs to provide free food and free wifi to attract young people.



Co-Production

Proactive, regular, face to face sessions with existing services, using a number of different ways to work with service users (surveys, focus groups, workshops).



Consensus Voting

Paper and online voting open to the entire community on specific policies. To include participatory budgetting, where all members of the community can approach the Council with a pitch.



Consensus Conference

Meeting in Millom town centre in response to specific policy issues. It is important to make sure it is widely publicised to make sure that the opportunity is open to everyone in the community.

Agenda Setting

Policy Development

Decision Making

Implementation


How we want to be treated



Be kind to us



Don't shout at us



Make eye contact with us and talk to us on our level (rather than looking down on us)



Listen to us




Smile at us



Reply when we speak to you

We want to be treated with respect.

Things we would like a say about



Leisure and recreation: Safe, clean, accessible, affordable and fun places to spend our free time.



Access to transport: Safe, affordable, accessible, and reliable public transport and taxis.




Volunteering: What accessible volunteering opportunities we can have, groups we can access

We want to feel safe above everything else.

How we want to be involved



Face to face




Small groups



One to one

We find it easier to understand things through pictures rather than words, so please present information using images when possible.

The people we want with us



SUPPORT Staff



Family



The most important people we want with us are support staff, parents, and close family friends. These are the people we trust and feel safe with.



Report to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date 28 February 2024
 Key Decision No
 Public/Private Public

Portfolio Cross Cutting
 Directorate Cross Cutting
 Lead Officer Nik Hardy, Assistant Chief Executive

Title **Committee Update Report and Work Programme**

Summary: To provide Members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) with an overview of matters related to the committee’s work. The report also sets out a draft work programme for the committee.

Recommendations: It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note items on the most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions.
2. Note progress on resolutions from previous meetings
3. Agree the draft work programme for 2023/24.

Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Scrutiny:	Place OSC 28/02/2024
Council:	N/A

1. Background

1.1. The Cumberland Constitution (Part 3, Section 5 Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules) sets out that Overview and Scrutiny committees will consider the following items at their meetings:

16 PROCEDURE AT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

16.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee shall consider the following business:

16.1.1 minutes of the last meeting;

16.1.2 declarations of interest (including whipping declarations);

16.1.3 consideration of any matter referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to call in of a decision;

16.1.4 responses of the Executive to reports of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee;

16.1.5 Councillor's Call for Action; and

16.1.6 the business otherwise set out on the agenda for the meeting.

1.2. The minutes of the last meeting are considered as a separate agenda item and the Chair will seek declarations of interest at the start of each scrutiny meeting. This Scrutiny Update Report will provide detail on references to the Committee, responses of the Executive and any Councillors Call for Action.

2. References to Place Scrutiny Committee

2.1. None

3. Councillors Call for Action

3.1. None

4. Responses of Executive to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1. None

5. Progress on Resolutions from Previous Meetings

5.1. The following table sets out the meeting date and resolution that requires following up. The status is presented as either "closed", "pending" (date expected), or "outstanding". An item is considered outstanding if no update or progress has been made after three panel meetings. All the completed actions will be removed from the list following the meeting.

	Meeting date	Item	Resolution	Status
1	06/09/2023	PLOS.20/23 Housing Introduction – Overview of Responsibilities	2) That the Senior Manager Housing would liaise with Environmental Health to provide the Committee with further information on the timescales for dealing with complaints about damp and mould. 4) That the Assistant Director Public Health and Protection would provide the Committee with more detailed information on the breakdown of the complaints received as detailed in the presentation.	Pending Pending
2	06/09/2023	PLOS.21/23 Empty Properties	3) That the Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport provide the Committee with further information regarding empty commercial properties within town centres.	Pending
3	01/11/2023	PLOS.28/23 Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal	5) That the Committee conduct a Scrutiny Review on the topic of public transport.	Pending
4	03/01/2024	PLOS.37/23 Economic Development – Strategic Issues and Opportunities Overview	4) That the Policy and Scrutiny Officer arrange for some information on the reprofiling of HS2 funding within the Council area to be provided to the committee.	Pending

6. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

6.1. The most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions is published on the Cumberland Council website, covering the period 1 March 2024 to 30 June 2024:

[Browse plans - Executive, 2023 | Cumberland Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/council/plans/2023/06/01/forward-plan-of-key-decisions)

6.2. The following decisions fall within the remit of Place Scrutiny Committee:

Issue	Decision Maker	Details
Procurement of recycling disposal and processing	Portfolio Holder - Sustainable, Resilient and Connected Places	Procurement of recycling disposal and processing
Draft Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Cumberland	Executive 13/02/2024 – 16/06/24	To agree to the commencement of a public consultation on a draft Public Space Protection Order for Cumberland.
iSH Enterprise Campus development, Leconfield Industrial Estate, Cleator Moor	Executive 23/04/2024	That Executive recommend that full Council draw down capital funding, award the building contract, agree the proposed scheme of officer delegation.
Citadels Project - Cumberland Council (English Street/Victoria Viaduct) Compulsory Purchase Order 2023	Executive 13/02/2013	Executive will be asked to give their approval to the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order to facilitate the delivery of the Citadels project
Capital contract award to upgrade the Wave Centre, Maryport (Future High Streets Fund)	Portfolio Holder - Leader	Approve the award of a contract to carry out capital improvements to upgrade and refurbish the Future High Streets Fund project at the Wave Centre, Maryport
Capital Contracts awards to develop an outdoor events space at Maryport Harbour (Future High Streets Fund)	Director of Business, Transformation and Change	Approve the award of a contract to carry out capital works to develop an outdoor events space, located near to Maryport Harbour
Climate and Nature Strategy	Executive, June 2024	To adopt the Climate and Nature Strategy
Carlisle Southern Gateway – Award of Stage 2 of Design and Build Contract	Executive, 23/04/24	Award of stage 2 of design and build contract using the Capital Works Framework for the Carlisle Southern Gateway public realm project.

7. Work Planning

- 7.1. A robust work programme is important for scrutiny. Work planning activity will take place across the year to ensure that the work programme remains up to date.
- 7.2. Work planning meetings have taken place between relevant Directors and the Place Committee Chair and Vice Chair. The draft work programme is provided at Appendix A. Scrutiny Members are asked to consider this work programme in the context of key decisions that are on the Forward Plan and any references to scrutiny and comment on this.

8. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 8.1. This report provides an overview of matters related to the committee's remit. The report also sets out the draft work programme. Members are asked to consider the

recommendations in order to ensure that scrutiny activity remains effective and focussed on Cumberland Council's strategic priorities.

Implications:

Contribution to the Cumberland Plan Priorities - Effective scrutiny plays an important part in the delivery of the Council Plan priorities.

Relevant Risks - None directly associated with this report.

Consultation / Engagement – n/a

Legal – Not required. Report for information only.

Finance – Not required. Report for information only.

Information Governance – Not required. Report for information only.

Impact Assessments – Not required. Report for information only.

Contact details:

Contact Officer: Rowan Jones, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

Email: Rowan.Jones@cumberland.gov.uk

Appendices attached to report:

- Appendix A – Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Work Programme

Background papers:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix A: Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Work Programme 2023/24

Meeting	Report	Portfolio Holder	Directorate
17 May 23	Overview of Major Place Projects Call in - Maryport Wave Centre	Leader Leader	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
12 July 23	Climate and Nature Update Community Wealth Building	Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services Governance and Thriving Communities	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
06 Sept 23	St Cuthberts Garden Village Update Levelling Up - Workington (Highways) Housing Introduction - overview of responsibilities Empty Properties - Approaches Food Cumberland Strategic Framework	Policy and Regulatory Services Sustainable, Resilient and Connected Places Childrens, family wellbeing and housing Childrens, family wellbeing and housing Governance and Thriving Communities	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Adult Wellbeing and Housing Adult Wellbeing and Housing Public Health and Communities
01 Nov 23	Borderlands - Cumberland Projects and Programmes Culture, Health and Wellbeing - developing ideas Overview of Major Place Projects	Leader Vibrant and Healthy Places Leader	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
Page 99 09 Nov 23	Meet the Housing Provider (Place hosted all member briefing)	Childrens, family wellbeing and housing	Adult Wellbeing and Housing
03 Jan 23	Nuclear - relationship between council and nuclear sector Economic Development - strategic issues and opportunities overview	Leader Leader	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
	Workshop (post meeting): Tullie House – business planning and relationship development	Vibrant and Healthy Places	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
28 Feb 23	Waste - implications of Government policy on waste Environment Agency partner update iSH Enterprise Campus development Community Power	Sustainable, Resilient and Connected Places Sustainable, Resilient and Connected Places Leader Governance and Thriving Communities	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Public Health and Communities
	Workshop (post meeting): Overview of transport opportunities – discussion and scoping for transport inquiry	Leader	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport
24 Apr 23	Neighbourhoods - detail TBC -libraries, archives, greenspaces Climate and Nature Strategy GLL (Better) Partner Update Regulatory Policies Tourism	Vibrant and Healthy Places Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services Vibrant and Healthy Places Cumberland Policy and Regulatory Services Vibrant and Healthy Places	Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport Public Health and Communities Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport

This page is intentionally left blank