



JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the **Joint Executive Committee** held on Monday, 3 March 2025 at 10.30 am at Patterdale Room, Voreda House, Penrith

PRESENT:

Cllr J Battye	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr P Bell	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr J Brook	Westmorland and Furness Council (Co-Chair)
Cllr B Cannon	Cumberland Council
Cllr M Fryer	Cumberland Council
Cllr A Jarvis	Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr E Williamson	Cumberland Council

Officers in attendance:

Assistant Chief Executive (Cumberland Council)
Chief Executive (Cumberland Council)
Chief Executive (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Chief Financial Officer (Cumberland Council)
Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer (Cumberland Council)
Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Director of Enabler Services (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Director of Thriving Places (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Director of Business, Transformation and Change (Cumberland Council)
Interim Waste Manager (Cumberland Council)
Programme Manager (Westmorland and Furness Council)
Project Manager (Cumberland Council)
Democratic and Electoral Services Manager (Westmorland and Furness Council)

Also in attendance:

Enterprising Cumbria Programme
Enterprising Cumbria Programme Director

PART I ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr Hinton.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

69. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, That the press and public be not excluded during consideration of any items on the agenda today.

70. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

71. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There had been no requests received to ask any questions or statements or receive any petitions from members of the public.

72. JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer (Westmorland and Furness Council) informed the Committee that the Work Programme would be presented to each future meeting to set out the business of future meetings and agendas.

The secretariat of the Committee switched every six months between Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Council's, so the Work Programme updates would sit with the authority providing the secretariat.

In line with Access to Information legislation any key decisions to be taken by the Committee would also need to be published on each Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the 28 days before the decisions were taken.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee received and noted the Joint Executive Committee Work Programme.

73. WASTE INTER-AUTHORITY AGREEMENT (WIAA) - ANNUAL BUDGET REVIEW 2025 - 26

The Project Manager (Cumberland Council) reminded the Committee that Project Agreement (Waste Disposal Contract) was subject to the Waste Inter Authority Agreement (WIAA) entered into on 31 March 2023 between Cumberland Council (Host) and Westmorland and Furness Council (Recipient) for the management of the Waste Disposal Contract.

A draft budget for 2025/26 for the WIAA of £43.893m was considered.

The proposed budget of £43.893m was an increase of £1.083m on the original budget 2024/25 of £42.810m agreed by this Committee on 22 November 2024. The reasons for the proposed increase of £1,083m were:-

- £1.165m forecast contract inflation 2025/26 (estimate assumption 3%)
- £0.116m net additional cost of disaggregating land fill transport costs from waste contract unitary charge
- £0.081m Business Rates taper relief ending
- £0.041m forecast pay award 2025/26 (estimate assumption 3%)
- £0.011m Kendal Fell contract revisions
- (£0.290m) Impact of sale of Cumbria Waste Management £0.127m reduction in rental income less (£0.417m) reduced expenditure
- (£0.041m) Pay award and contract inflation variations reduction to original budget 2024/25.

He also updated the Committee with the discussions with Biffa.

Cllr Jarvis asked whether National Insurance (NI) was a significant issue. The Project Manager (Cumberland) commented that the NI costs would be absorbed.

Cllr Jarvis emphasised the importance of having the split of this financial year completed by June 2025.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee approved the overall Waste Disposal budget for the Financial year for the hosted service - FY25/26 combined budget value of £43.893m.

74. DISAGGREGATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Director of Business, Transformation and Change (Cumberland Council) updated the Committee on the Disaggregation Programme Delivery.

She commented that this Committee was responsible for the oversight and management of the hosted services including the development and implementation of disaggregation plans. Any changes to disaggregation dates must be approved by this Committee following consideration by the Joint Officer Board (JOB).

On 13 February 2025, the JOB had considered the proposed disaggregation of services detailed in the report and recommended to this Committee that they were disaggregated in line with the proposals set out below.

The Connecting Cumbria team worked to deliver the Digital Infrastructure Strategy 2020-2025 and its attendant action plan. That included Project Gigabit, support for voucher funded community broadband projects, Very Hard To Reach premises, 4G coverage and 5G programmes. The team and related contracts were hosted by Cumberland Council, with oversight provided by the Connecting Cumbria Governance Board.

Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council had agreed that Connecting Cumbria would run as a hosted service until 31 December 2025, in line with the 2020-25 Digital Infrastructure Strategy, with that arrangement to be reviewed annually by the Connecting Cumbria Governance Board. Due to the continued successes of the hosting arrangement and increasing interoperability of the work across the whole county, it was recommended that changes were made to ensure that the hosting arrangement continued on a long-term basis.

It was proposed that Connecting Cumbria moved to long-term hosting and continued to provide a service to both authorities, reporting into the Connecting Cumbria Governance Board, with oversight from the JOB and this Committee. This would be supported by the Connecting Cumbria Digital Infrastructure Strategy 2026-30.

The Apprenticeship service supported all apprentices and trainees engaged via any of the new authorities and the completion of their apprenticeship programme. The service was initially agreed to be hosted by Westmorland and Furness Council for a period of up to 24 months, to the disaggregation date of 31 March 2025. Following a review, it had been agreed by this Committee on 13 November 2023 to bring forward the disaggregation date of elements of the service from 31 March 2025 to 30 September 2024. That included disaggregation of workforce planning and resourcing, marketing and communications, inclusion, mentor training and support, support for wider strategic objectives, employability pathways, ambassador network, and external partnerships. Interim arrangements would be required for the digital apprenticeship service account and additional work required for apprenticeship levy/associated funding through to March 2025.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED; That the Joint Executive Committee:-

1. Noted the recommendation from the Joint Officer Board to move Connecting Cumbria, currently due to disaggregate by 31 December 2025, to long-term hosting by Cumberland Council; and
2. Noted the recommendation from the Joint Officer Board to extend the date of Apprenticeships disaggregation from 31 March 2025 to 31 March 2026.

75. LONG-TERM HOSTED SERVICES Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Assistant Chief Executive, Cumberland Council reminded the Committee that under the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) entered between Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council governing the provision of hosted services, the Councils had agreed to establish a Joint Executive Committee.

The Terms of Reference set out within the IAA stated that this Committee was responsible for reviewing the performance of hosted services against budget and indicators for service quality, performance, and efficiency.

The Committee would also receive an annual report on performance, finance, and proposed service improvements.

On 25 January 2024 this Committee had agreed the performance measures for each of the long-term hosted services, with a further request to provide additional qualitative data where possible.

The performance data collated for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 was detailed at Appendix 1.

He commented that overall performance was still doing well with 75% of the green targets and 25% red targets. There were a few areas for improvement in terms of physical activity of children, system related issues with Registration Services and data for the adoption service. He outlined positives which included the digital infrastructure coverage continued to improve and there was a high completion rate for Emergency Planning.

Cllr Battye asked for an explanation why no fostering assessments had been completed in the last quarter. The Assistant Chief Executive (Cumberland Council) agreed that the information be circulated to Members of the Committee.

Cllr Bell asked whether the Registration Service should be made more accessible. The Assistant Chief Executive (Cumberland Council) agreed that a response would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

Cllr Jarvis asked if the targets for the Registration Service could be looked at alongside the opening times of the service.

The Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer (Cumberland Council) commented that this was being looked at and that the Team were in the process of being disaggregated by the end of the month. When a Lead was in place at both authorities their task would be to improve the performance of the service. She commented that there were some KPI's that were statutory and it was pleasing to see that they had increased. The percentage of births and marriages registrations did continue to fall but that was down to customer choice.

Cllr Fryer commented that assessments did fluctuate between quarters and that there was clearly an issue with either reporting or performance. The Director of Business, Transformation and Change (Cumberland Council) commented that performance was assessed on completions. She agreed to take back the comments to the Service for them to confirm.

He also commented that main stream carers had fluctuated by one and for three quarters of a year there had been no increase in the number of careers.

Cllr Williamson commented that data won't be able to be downloaded for a number of weeks and that may be having an impact on the figures reported.

Cllr Fryer also suggested that the recycling and composting target of 60% were not the right target but should be a stretched target of 75% to 80%.

The Director of Enabler Services (Westmorland and Furness Council) advised the Committee that the Children Social Careers was still a single live instance but there would be a planned downtime later in March.

Cllr Brook asked that for the next meeting could an explanation be provided of the relevance of some of the KPI's and the data.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee noted the performance update for long-term hosted services during Quarter 3 of 2024/25.

76. IAA AMENDMENTS AND BUDGET 2025/26

The Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer (Westmorland and Furness Council) reminded the Committee that the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) between Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council had been entered into on 31 March 2023 with the purpose of providing the arrangements for the governance and delivery of hosted services and functions. The authorities had agreed that for varying periods of time the exercise of their duties would be served by certain functions and services being discharged and delivered as a number of shared services. The IAA sets out the arrangements for this Committee to undertake responsibility for the governance of those functions and services, and the arrangements and general terms on which the authorities administer and exercise responsibility. A Service Schedule was in place for each hosted service. That was the schedule that detailed the agreed approach to delivering the functions described within the Inter Authority Agreement in terms of service provision, performance monitoring and costs.

The disaggregation of services had been implemented in accordance with the terms set out in the IAA. This Committee had also approved recommendations to bring disaggregation dates forward, postpone the date of disaggregation, implement revised delivery arrangements, and move to long-term hosting. That had meant that a Variation to the IAA had been required.

Cumberland Executive on 19 March 2024 and Westmorland and Furness Cabinet on 26 March 2024, had considered reports setting out proposed changes to the IAA. Both authorities had approved those changes and delegated authority to Senior Officers of each authority to enter into a Deed of Variation, following consultation with the respective relevant Members.

A Deed of Variation to update the IAA with 12 2024/25 Service Schedules had been sealed by Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council in December 2024. The Deed of Variation updated Service Schedules for hosted services in accordance with changes agreed by this Committee, revised the Hosted Services budget for 2024/25 and updated finance information within Service Schedules, and noted Service Schedules for hosted services that had disaggregated by 31 March 2024.

The drafting of a Deed of Variation to update the IAA with the remaining nine 2024/25 Service Schedules was in progress, to be completed by 31 March 2025.

At its last meeting on 27 January 2025, this Committee had received a report with timescales for Amendments to the IAA and Budget 2025/26 and had agreed to receive draft amendments and draft revenue Annual Budgets to this meeting.

The IAA provided that once agreed by this Committee, the budget proceeded to the Cabinet and Council meeting as part of the annual council budget setting process. Both Councils had included within their 2025/26 proposed budgets the estimated IAA 2025/26 budget requirements. The 2025/26 IAA elements of the budget had been updated for any agreed increases/decreases in annual budgets by the SROs and updated for planned service disaggregation timelines. Both Councils had included the appropriate inflationary uplifts (including pay award) for 2025/26 in the proposed budgets and they were allocated to the IAA services in year.

In terms of the draft revenue Annual Budgets for each Hosted Service, the latest budget monitoring position for Q3 (end of December 2024) had been used to determine any required changes to the 2025/26 budgets. Increases had been applied for the 2024/25 pay award and annual inflation. Additional changes to the budget reflected any changes to the scope of the Service Schedule or other changes to the agreement.

Budgetary implications had been included and that information was set out at Appendix 1. Of the 20 hosted services, seven had been signed off by the Senior Responsible Officer. The position with each Service Schedule was set out at Appendix 2 (A and B). Service Schedules to be removed from the IAA following disaggregation were set out in Appendix 2 (C).

Waste Disposal was long-term hosted and subject to a separate Waste Inter Authority Agreement (WIAA) entered into on 31 March 2023 between Cumberland Council (Host) and Westmorland and Furness Council (Recipient) for the management of the Waste Disposal Contract. The draft 2025/26 budget was part of a separate WIAA report to this meeting.

An agreement under s.113 of the Local Government Act 1972 had been entered into on 31 March 2023 for a duration of 12 months and had been subsequently extended into 2024/25. The authorities had agreed that because of the specialist nature of key roles which formerly sat in the County Council, the allocation of these roles to one or other authority would leave either Cumberland or Westmorland and Furness Council exposed to risk in terms of service delivery or skills shortage.

It was proposed that further recruitment and/or training would take place with a view to ending these roles within a 12-month period.

Approximately eight staff employed by Westmorland and Furness and 12 employed by Cumberland in this position, with a proposal for them to continue in shared roles. That was a reduction to the original number of shared roles of 333.

The arrangements put in place to govern the shared roles, enabled authorities to work effectively together, with appropriate protections in place for each would continue to mean that costs of the shared roles were met equally between both authorities.

There were a number of other legal agreements that were required as a result of shared service or other arrangements between the two authorities, these include but were not limited to, an agreement for the Coroners Services, services offered to the Cumbria Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority. As these arrangements were continuing into 2025/26, there was a need for the continuation of these Agreements, the principles of which had been agreed by the respective authorities.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee:-

1. Agreed the proposed amendments to the Inter Authority Agreement and Budget for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2;
2. Noted that the 2025/26 Service Schedules will be finalised by 31 March 2025, and the Deed of Variation to update the Inter Authority Agreement to be completed after this date;
3. Noted progress on the Deed of Variation to update the Inter Authority Agreement with the remaining 9 Service Schedules for 2024/25 by 31 March 2025; and
4. Delegated the authority to agree final terms of the Deed of Variation for the Inter Authority Agreement, the s.113 Agreement and any other arrangements between Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Council which require a legal agreement between the two authorities, to the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officers for Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness in consultation with the respective Leaders of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holders.

77. ENTERPRISING CUMBRIA LIVE PROGRAMMES UPDATE

The Programme Director, Enterprising Cumbria submitted a detailed report relating to the four key programmes being delivered by Enterprise Cumbria. The report provided an update on activities, both planned and delivered, since the last meeting of the Committee.

She highlighted in particular the changes to seek change control approval to support businesses in the Kirby Lonsdale Area. In terms of Live Programmes grant letter offers were still outstanding and bids for the Borderlands Energy Programme had been oversubscribed. She also commented on the positive Learner Numbers for the Skills Bootcamp.

The report highlighted that at the end of 2024 (the last reporting period) 67 businesses had received grant funding to help them grow, 198 businesses had been

supported via an advisor, 179 individuals had been supported to develop their business idea and 33 of these had received £500 to help to launch their business.

There was a projected underspend of circa £350,000 on the programme due to under-delivery, which if unspent would return to central government. A grants programme had been devised to support businesses impacted by the tragic fire in Kirkby Lonsdale in December 2024 which could see the underspend used to offer financial assistance to help businesses in the area to begin their recovery.

Enterprising Cumbria had responded quickly to Westmorland and Furness Council's request for support and were looking to obtain approval via the appropriate change controls through Cumberland Council, who, as the Accountable Body would need to make any payments.

Westmorland and Furness Council had proposed to continue the business support activities in 2025/26, albeit with a reduced budget due to the lesser funds available for local authorities next year under the UKSPF programme. All exiting projects had been offered the opportunity to apply to deliver again with a Westmorland and Furness Council Investment Panel assessing these proposals.

Delivery continued to SMEs across Cumbria as part of the Cumbria Accelerator service. By 17 January 2025, 296 businesses had received a three-hour support session with an advisor to troubleshoot issues and move them towards growth. That was against a target of 555 and represented 53% of targeted delivery.

There was likely to be under-delivery by year-end as three providers were struggling to achieve their targets due to lack of enquiries. Due to procurement regulations, it was not viable to remove or reduce their contracts and bring in alternative suppliers, therefore, operating within the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) programme deliverables, they were looking to deploy funding into other activities such as marketing and events to avoid underspend on that programme.

By 17 January 2025, 27 of the targeted 55 businesses had received 12 hours of support. There were a few businesses awaiting support under that aspect of delivery which typically focused on ongoing coaching and mentoring.

While there was no expectation of clawback of funding linked to underperformance there was clearly a need to review activities so that 2025/26 funding was used to its full potential. Key to this would be earlier procurement and contract start dates (in the current year delivery did not commence in earnest until August 2024) and better marketing of the programme.

The DBT were keen to see more businesses in Barrow-in-Furness supported on the back of the investment in the area, with the possibility of increased funds under that programme for 2025/26.

Workshops continued to be delivered, focusing on key issues affecting businesses across the county. Recent successes had included events on effective online

communication and understanding the impacts of menopause in the workplace. Planned events included a hospitality workshop and a marketing masterclass.

Support continued to around 40 businesses within the portfolio of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) businesses.

Meetings had been held in January 2025 with the following businesses to advise and support Cumbria Marketing Ltd, Enesco Ltd, Futamura UK Ltd, Hollingsworth & Vose Ltd and Holmen Iggesund.

Support to Sealy UK and Anord Mardix was ongoing to facilitate new periods of growth.

Enterprising Cumbria oversaw the submission of five Cumbrian Expression of Interest (EOI) bids for the NWNZH SPARK public sector net zero project pot (£525K total) with applicants able to apply for funding in £25k increments, to a maximum of £75k in a single bid. They were now working to support full applications by 9 February 2025.

We are working to facilitate bids for the Borderlands Energy Programme Call for Projects - £1.5-3.5 million pilot projects with approximately £4 million available to both Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils (EOI 19 Feb 2025).

The Junior Policy Officer, funded through NWNZH, had started in January 2025.

Cllr Mark Fryer and David Beeby, Chair, Economic Growth Board, had attended the first North-West Senior Leaders Forum, ensuring Cumbria's voice was heard across the region.

Enterprising Cumbria's Head of Net Zero took up her position on the Net Zero North West Board (working to deliver a co-ordinated net zero vision for the region). Planning was underway to host the next Board meeting in Cumbria, showcasing Cumbria's impressive net zero projects.

They were exploring options for leading the development of a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) for Cumbria. A LAEP was a key enabler to delivering Cumbria's net zero ambitions. It provided a practical roadmap to delivering net zero and would provide a strong evidence base for a devolved strategic authority to deliver on new powers and funding, as well as helping Cumbria make the case for investment in local energy networks.

The Head of Net Zero had attended events during Nuclear Week in Parliament, supporting the Nuclear Regions event as part of the North West Nuclear Arc, and making connections for promoting Cumbria as centre of excellence for new nuclear.

They followed up on the successful Anaerobic Digestion (AD) Workshop, by visiting Anns Hill Farm, which had installed an AD plant that was powering the farm. They were writing up a case study for Anns Hill and working to understand blockers to further agricultural AD projects.

The Head of Net Zero had attended the Solvency UK Investment Delivery Forum, connecting with investors and spreading the message that Cumbria was going for growth and seizing the opportunities provided by greater devolution.

84% of contracted/targeted Learner had been achieved since training began in August 2024.

Contract Modifications made under change controls, had been granted to allow further provision in Project Management, Logistics, Event Management and Construction (£180,050). As noted at this meeting in January 2025, learning had started/or was due to start for candidates and would be completed by the deadline of 31 March 2025, with learning providers advertising for learners.

Of the learners who had completed a Skills Bootcamp (SBC), the Milestone three outcome (unemployed into employment, employed in a new role, self-employed with further business opportunities or employed having increased roles/responsibilities), we have achieved an outcome of 71% to date. (Our DfE target by September 2025 is 75%).

Following this Committee's meeting in January 2025, the ITT for Wave 6 Skills Bootcamp had gone 'live' on The Chest (portal) with tender Lots available in:

- Logistics
- Project Management
- Construction
- Leadership and Management
- Digital
- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Other (Carers, Hospitality, Early Years, Learning Support and Assistants)

The aim was to contract with Learning Providers to allow SBC provision to commence as close to start of the 2025/26 financial year and was on track at present.

Cumbria Careers Hub was funded by the Department of Education through the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) and match funding provided by Enterprising Cumbria core budget.

Cumbria Careers Hub was responsible for supporting the delivery of the careers guidance programme from Year 7 to year 13 in Secondary Schools, Special Education Needs Schools (including Section 41 independently funded schools) and Pupil Referral Units and the four Further Education Colleges in Cumbria.

That equated to 53 Institutions. Funding was allocated each academic year and started on 1 September 2024. The programme employed a team of 3.7 staff on fixed-term contracts to 31 August 2025. The programme required up to £70,000 match funding to contribute 50% funding towards staff salaries.

The 2024/25 Careers and Enterprise Company contracts operated on an academic year basis with the current contract operating from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. The table at Appendix 1 outlined the targets within the main CEC contract. Performance against these targets would be reported at the end of each academic Term with results to 31 December 2024 listed. There was very low risk to not achieving the targets set out for this academic year.

The Department for Education and Careers and Enterprise Company had confirmed that the strategic priorities for the next academic year would remain the same as last year, namely:

Priority 1: Improve careers provision in schools and colleges against the Gatsby Benchmarks through support, training for the education workforce and quality assurance.

Priority 2: Provide more high-quality experiences with employers for students and teachers – with a focus on current ‘cold spots’.

Priority 3: Amplify apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes – including supporting the implementation of the Provider Access Legislation (PAL).

Priority 4: Target interventions for economically disadvantaged young people (Free School Meals (FSM)) and those who face barriers (SEND, PRU, Rural, Home Educated)..

Priority 5: Connect careers provision in schools and colleges to the needs of local economies (as articulated through Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)).

Specific Projects of Note to support achievement of the above targets:

- Cumbria Careers Day on 5 March 2025.
- Cumbria Talent Force Development and scheduled launch March 2025 (Countywide alumni of 18-35 year olds who would provide career pathway posters and support schools to promote careers across all sectors).
- Ongoing training of trainee teachers to integrate careers into the curriculum, understand vocational and technical pathways and provide targeted support to pupils facing barriers.
- Food technology project for year 10 and 11 students to improve social mobility, attainment and career awareness.

Cllr Jarvis commented that he was grateful for the work being done to support Kirkby Lonsdale.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee:-

1. Noted and comment on the activities and deliverables of all programmes;

2. Noted the plans in paragraphs 3.4/3.5 to seek change control approval to support businesses in the Kirkby Lonsdale area;
3. Noted the Skills Bootcamp ITT outlined in paragraph 3.28; and
4. Noted the comments on the progress of Careers Service outcomes at Appendix 1.

78. ENTERPRISING CUMBRIA - ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The Programme Director, Enterprising Cumbria commented that to support the transition of LEPs into Local Authorities or devolved administrations, a range of guidance had been released by government to support the transition of functions. That included guidance on developing governance, accountability and transparency in decision making. For areas with a devolution deal that guidance had been provided in the “English Accountable Body Devolution” guidance, however for areas without a devolution agreement, areas were expected to ensure that there was transparent governance in place, evidence was provided as to how all upper tier authorities in the area were involved in decision-making and how service provision would be ensured across the whole area. It was also a requirement to ensure that an Economic Strategy was in place, and an Economic Growth Board was in situ.

To support the new arrangements, a Collaboration Agreement had been agreed by the two Councils which details the activity and relationship between the two Councils for the delivery of functions transferred from the CLEP. That did not provide sufficient detail on the day-to-day management of the Enterprising Cumbria delivery or the governance and economic growth functions within it.

In line with the Terms of Reference for this Committee, it was the responsibility to “Agree and keep under review the assurance framework to deliver Cumbria wide economic growth functions, including any sub boards or advisory groups”. The paper sought to provide an overview of the Enterprising Cumbria Assurance Framework and requested approval of the Assurance Framework attached at Appendix 1.

In developing the Assurance Framework, the following guidance had been applied.

- Local Enterprise Partnerships: integration of LEP functions into local democratic institutions- August 2023 and December 2023.
- English Devolution Accountability Framework
- Best practice from other national governance guidance such as the Grants Functional Standards on Fraud Risk Assessments and the UK Subsidy Control regime.

The Assurance Framework had been split into three parts that reflected the areas of assurance that Government expected to see in place to demonstrate effective and transparent decision making.

- Roles, Responsibilities and Decision Making
- Local Scrutiny, Checks and Balances
- Programme Management and Delivery

That section detailed the roles of the different elements within the Enterprising Cumbria structure including this Committee and the Accountable Body. It provided an overview of the function of this Committee in making decisions, and the role of the Accountable Body in formalising these decisions. The role of the Economic Growth Board as an advisory body within the structure, and the means by which other subgroups could be established, in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference was also explained. Finally, it detailed the role of Enterprising Cumbria in the programme management, strategy development and delivery across the Cumbria geography.

Transparency and appropriate scrutiny of decision making was a key element of any Assurance Framework. That section considered the importance of maintaining standards of public life across the governance structure, and the mechanisms by which all Officers or Members working across the Enterprising Cumbria activity was charged with upholding these requirements. It included the requirement for identifying and declaring conflicts of interest, including those members of the Economic Growth Board who would not be covered through the conflict-of-interest policy of either of the local authorities.

The section also included how Enterprising Cumbria would demonstrate transparency of decision making to government through its approach to Value for Money, Audit and the required performance monitoring. It also demonstrated its approach to transparency and decision making to the public with details of the documents that would be published on the Enterprising Cumbria website and the two Council websites.

The section focussed on the programme management delivery of existing and legacy programmes as identified within the Collaboration Agreement. The Assurance Framework references the reporting and management requirements for the programmes and included a proposed approach to the management of scheme changes which would allow minor changes to projects to be considered and approved by the Enterprising Cumbria team, which would be considered in line with the scheme of delegation that was to be finalised and included as Appendix 5. That section also included the proposed approach to Fraud and Risk, and Subsidy control.

That version of the Assurance Framework purposefully focussed on the existing and legacy programmes. It was recommended that the Assurance Framework be reviewed on an annual basis to allow it to reflect government policy developments, as well as adoption of the Enterprising Cumbria approach to the development of new schemes.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee:-

1. Approved the adoption of the Enterprising Cumbria Assurance Framework attached at Appendix 1 and its publication on the website, subject to agreement of the scheme of delegation; and

2. Authorised Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council Section 151 Officers, Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, Cumberland Council and Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, Westmorland and Furness Council in consultation with the Leader of Cumberland Council and the Leader of Westmorland and Furness Council to agree and finalise a scheme of delegation in relation to Enterprising Cumbria for inclusion in Appendix 1 within the Assurance Framework.

79. ENTERPRISING CUMBRIA 2025/26 BUDGET

The Programme Director, Enterprising Cumbria reported that the primary drivers behind the budget increases were the Skills Bootcamp grant increase relating to Wave 6, DWP Connect grant, UK REiif and Devolution preparation costs.

Enterprising Cumbria budget had increased from £3.611m 24-25 to £5.897m 25-26 was primarily due to the commencement of skills bootcamp Wave 6 budget increasing grant income £1.111m and carry forward of grant from 24-25 £0.299m from Wave 5. Drawdown from reserves had enabled the budget to increase £0.776m primarily to be used for Devolution preparation and to contribute toward UKREiif costs. Other income £0.100m increase was due to Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council contributing £0.050m each towards UKREiif costs.

The Interim Programme Director/Core Budget consisted of the Programme Director costs and Devolution work to be commissioned by Westmorland and Furness (W&F) and payment to W&F for assurance work. The cessation of DLUHC Grant of £0.234m had resulted in the necessary drawdown from reserves to fund the core budget to reflect the 2024-25 budget. The £0.006m decrease from the £0.370m budget 2024-25 was due to the grant award being £0.234m which when the budget was set was estimated to be £0.240m.

The Business Support budget 2025-26 was expected to reflect the 2024-25 budget position subject to grant approval.

The Cumbria Career Enterprise Hub budget reflected 2024-25 budget assuming all grant funding would be the same. The increase from 2024-25 reflected the careers hub team grant which was £0.021m more than anticipated when received during 2024-25. It was assumed the same level of grant would be received during 2025-26.

The Net Zero Programme budget would be as 2024-25 subject to clarification of grant to be received for 2025-26.

The Skills Bootcamp budget for 2025-26 would comprise of the former Wave 5 carry forward of grant from 2024-25 estimated to be £0.299m. The budget would be adjusted accordingly depending on the year end outturn position at the end of 2024-25 if there was difference from the £0.299m. Wave 6 grant was expected to be £2.945m and included a request from Enterprising Cumbria to Department for Education for specific additional support for BAE Systems focussed SBC of

£0.955m. If the BAE Systems SBC did not materialise the Wave 6 expenditure would be rebased to reflect any change.

Department for Work and Pension (DWP) grant had been received for £0.100m to commence preparatory work towards supporting people back into work. Work was expected to commence October 2025 to administer the grant that would be received to pay individuals. The full grant received late 2024-25 would be carried forward to 2025-26 if no expenditure occurred in financial year 2024-25.

It was reported that the devolution programme may require expenditure of £0.500m during 2025-26 funding from drawdown of reserves.

The Committee considered the earmarked reserve balance that was estimated to be £0.239m. It was essential that these earmarked reserves be maintained at a minimum level that meet all potential exit costs, if Enterprising Cumbria were to cease. That would ensure any financial risk for either authority was sufficiently mitigated.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee: -

1. Agreed the forecast 25-26 budget for Enterprising Cumbria as set out in the report;

2. Agreed to reduce the former LEP Reserves by £0.776m (from £1.015m to £0.239m) to fund any costs associated with mobilising activity for engagement in the Devolution Priority Programme £0.500m, loss of core grant MHCLG Grant funding £0.226m and UKREiiF (Real estate investment infrastructure forum) budget shortfall £0.050m; and

3. Noted that the Section 151 Officers would work together to determine a minimum level of reserves to be held as a contingency balance and review the overall usable reserve position and that this would be reported back to a future meeting of the Committee.

80. CUMBRIA ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Programme Director, Enterprising Cumbria reported that the Cumbria Economic Strategy sets out a new economic vision for Cumbria. Grounded in robust evidence and extensive engagement, it provided the direction for collective efforts to unlock the full potential of assets and address persistent barriers to growth and would form the basis of the devolution ambitions.

Going for Growth was about showcasing the potential and contribution to national priorities, but it was first and foremost a Cumbria document, focused on the region-wide solutions whilst recognising the need for tailored approaches that reflected the diversity of our places.

The strategy was more than just a policy document—it's a renewed partnership approach and a call to action. It urged local and national partners to leverage every available tool and take an active role in driving Cumbria's growth story.

The strategy was composed of four key sections:

- Introduction to Going for Growth: sets the context for the strategy and provided an overview of its development.
- State of the Region 2025: summarised the economic evidence base that underpinned the strategy.
- Cumbria 2045: presented the vision for growth and six key priorities for action.
- Delivering our vision: defined the core strategic outcomes that would be monitored through forthcoming delivery plans.

She commented that a draft amendment and an updated Strategy had been circulated.

Cllr Williamson asked that the descriptions of abbreviation be used in the Strategy and also that engagement with the Young Peoples Group was representative of Cumbria.

Cllr Fryer asked how we could encourage businesses to consider the Strategy and how they could develop their businesses further across the whole of the County.

The Chair of Enterprising Cumbria thanked everyone who contributed to developing the Strategy. He commented that, in general, there was a need to increase "Start Ups" while ensuring the sustainability of existing businesses. There was a need to raise the profile of Cumbria whilst helping to drive those existing businesses forward.

Cllr Jarvis commented that the physical infrastructure was not emphasised as it could be and that the whole resilience of the network was poor. He also asked about how the Strategy was being communicated to residents.

The Programme Director, Enterprising Cumbria mentioned that the document would be placed in Youth Centres, Libraries and public buildings to encourage community engagement.

Cllr Battye raised points regarding infrastructure with a focus on the M6 and West Coast Main Line along with Affordable Housing and Education and Skills.

Cllr Williamson suggested for each theme a podcast or video content creation which would reach a wider audience and be more appealing.

Cllr Brook moved the recommendations as amended which was seconded by Cllr Fryer.

RESOLVED, That the Joint Executive Committee unanimously :-

1. Approved the draft Cumbria Economic Strategy – Going for Growth 2025-2045 and delegate non-material amendments to the Cumberland Council Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport, and Westmorland and Furness Director of Thriving Places, following consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders from both authorities;
2. Noted the four Strategic Outcomes and measures outlined in the Strategy; and
3. Approved the development of a delivery plan.

The meeting ended at 11.31 am