

Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21





Chair's Foreword

Councillor Bill Wearing

I am sure we can all agree that 2020 was an extremely difficult year for everyone, and despite all the challenges I am delighted to present this report describing the work of Scrutiny during 2020 – 2021. It includes a wide range of information about the work Elected Members have undertaken over the past year; and most importantly the impact this has had.

Throughout the pandemic, Scrutiny Members quickly adapted to the new virtual ways of working to ensure that they continued their vital role in Cumbria County Council by holding decision makers to account; developing and reviewing policy; as well as considering how the Council is delivering on its commitments to the residents of Cumbria.

Over the past year all Scrutiny Advisory Boards and Scrutiny Committees have welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Cabinet and Senior Officers as they led the Council through the toughest of times. The Boards have sought to focus on the critical issues for the Council and provide constructive input in finding ways to improve outcomes for residents.

A warm thank you goes to the Chairs and Vice Chairs as they continue to bring energy and enthusiasm to their roles, particularly in these uncertain times. Under their leadership, Boards are working together on cross cutting issues; and consistently providing constructive challenge and recommendations for the Cabinet, Executive Directors and Partners.

I would also like to note my thanks to my Vice Chair Cllr Mark Wilson for his support over the past year; and the wide range of officers who support all the Boards with particular thanks to our excellent Policy and Scrutiny team led by Clare Killeen.

I look forward to another year of working through Scrutiny to help ensure improved outcomes for all customers, residents and businesses within Cumbria, in particular as we move forward with newly developed ways of working into recovery and beyond.



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Introduction

Purpose of the report

This Annual Report of Cumbria County Council's Scrutiny function looks at the work programme which was undertaken in the year 2020-21 by the Council's Scrutiny Advisory Boards. Within the report, the Chair of each Scrutiny Advisory Board has provided a brief overview of their role in scrutiny, as well as any key successes.

This Annual Report also outlines case studies that demonstrate the positive impact of scrutiny in improving outcomes for communities within Cumbria. As well as looking to the future of scrutiny and how Cumbria County Council can continue to utilise its role in effective policy and decision-making.

What is Scrutiny?

Ultimately, public scrutiny is the means by which Cumbria County Council's Cabinet can be held to account so as to protect the public interest and to ensure high-quality public services. Scrutiny acts as a 'critical friend' to policy and decision-makers through careful consideration of the effectiveness of both existing and future policies. With each Scrutiny Board being expected to provide a constructive challenge in order to improve decision-making.

What are the different Scrutiny Boards?

Within Cumbria County Council, it is the Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) that has the overall strategic responsibility for the Overview and Scrutiny function. SMB is supported by three main Scrutiny Advisory Boards, and the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee. The respective Boards and Committee scrutinise the Council's functions in relation to outcomes and services within the Board's remit. Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee reviews and scrutinises matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Cumbria. The Scrutiny Boards are:

- Children and Young People Scrutiny Advisory Board
- Adults Scrutiny Advisory Board
- Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board
- Local Economic Partnership Scrutiny Advisory Board
- Health Scrutiny Committee

What can the Scrutiny Boards do?

Three of the key roles for Scrutiny are policy review, policy development and scrutiny of decisions and performance. In relation to these, Scrutiny Boards may:

- Review and scrutinise the decisions and performance of the Cabinet and/or Committees and Council Officers, both in relation to individual decisions and over time;
- Assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its Budget and Policy Framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- Conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
- Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets, and/or particular service areas;
- Question Members of the Cabinet and/or Committees and Executive Directors about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with Service Plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives, or projects;
- Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area, and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Scrutiny Board and local people about their activities and performance
- Make recommendations to the Cabinet and/or appropriate Committees and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.

Reflections from the Chairs of the Council's Scrutiny Function

Scrutiny Management Board



Councillor Bill Wearing, Chair of Scrutiny Management Board

Following the pausing of all Council meetings in Spring of 2020, Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) Members were the first to formally meet remotely

over Microsoft Teams in May 2020 as the Council put into place the new ways of working we have since become very familiar with.

SMB led scrutiny of the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic and understanding the impact on our communities and on the Council's services at this first remote meeting and has continued to maintain a focus on the impacts throughout the 2020/21 year.

From early in the pandemic, Members of SMB have closely monitored the impacts of changes to ways of working for staff and for elected Members. This work continued through a Task and Finish Scrutiny Review commissioned by SMB in the autumn to explore post-pandemic ways of working, building on the benefits of the transformation achieved over the last year. This work, presented to Cabinet in March 2021, reflected the ongoing priority of Members on the health and wellbeing of the Council workforce.

This focus on transformation has been a feature of the SMB work programme over the lifespan of this Council. The scrutiny by Board Members has contributed to the development and delivery of the Council's rejuvenated approach to understanding and improving the experience of our customers, and the acceleration of digital service delivery which improves the service provided to customers and increases the efficiency of service delivery.

SMB Members have also engaged in the work to embed enterprise and commercial approaches across the Council and I'm sure Members will be interested to see how these approaches can be used effectively as part of financial strategy as the Council faces future financial challenges.

Key areas of focus during 2020/21:

- Response to the Coronavirus pandemic
- Organisational development and ways of working
- Strategic Planning

This is always an area of priority work as SMB leads scrutiny of the Council's strategic and budget planning each year – and 2020/21 was no different. I chaired two sessions over the Autumn of 2020, to which all non-executive Members were invited. Members were able to question the Council's leadership team on current and future plans. In their recommendations to Cabinet, Members highlighted the importance of building on the benefits of transformation, and the pressures on services which are likely to result from the pandemic. I was pleased to hear that Cabinet Members accepted all of Scrutiny's recommendations.

The potential for reform of local government in Cumbria is also a major element of the SMB work programme. I was able to chair an event in August to ensure all non-exec Members had the opportunity to learn more about the ongoing local government reorganisation process. SMB subsequently established a Task and Finish Group to contribute to the development of future local governance models that meet the needs and aspirations of Cumbria. In the light of the Government's announcement on local government reform consultation we will continue to provide Scrutiny input after the government makes a decision in the summer.

The next year is set to be another very busy and productive year for SMB Members overseeing Scrutiny's valuable work as our communities and the Council looks towards recovery and serving Cumbria's residents through a time of unprecedented change.

Performance Working Group

Scrutiny of Performance has been undertaken through the Performance Working Group (PWG), as a sub-group of Scrutiny Management Board. This provides a dedicated forum for consideration of the delivery of the Council Plan Delivery Plan and allows for in depth discussion with Assistant Directors and Senior Managers where performance is off target.

Moving forward, the PWG looks to continue to challenge and understand the drivers of underperformance in recognised areas which impact on financial delivery, whilst considering variances as they emerge. In addition, the PWG will continue to add value by strengthening links with the rest of the Council's scrutiny function to ensure scrutiny activity is informed by performance.



Key areas of focus during 2020/21:

- COVID response across the children's system
- Safeguarding

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Advisory Board



Councillor Val Tarbitt, Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Advisory Board

I am pleased to have chaired the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Advisory Board during the last year.

Given the unprecedented closure of schools in March 2020 and January 2021, the response to Covid-19 has been the dominant issue for the year. As a governor at the Carlisle PRU, I have been keen to understand the implications not only in terms of education, but also in terms of child safeguarding, inclusion and a host of other issues that will be impacting on children and young people.

Scrutiny's role was three-fold:

1. To scrutinise the Covid-19 response across the whole children's system – education, social care and early help (which we did at an informal meeting in July and in two Board sessions in September and December).
2. To ensure that the administration was still focused on what it needed to do to meet the requirements of Ofsted (December Board).

3. To scrutinise progress in the development of a new Early Help Strategy to ensure that recovery from Covid-19 is strong on prevention (which we did in the December Board).

Overall, we have been assured that the children's system has been coping under immense strain, and that there is a continued focus on the lives of children and young people. The Board has welcomed the regular and detailed bulletins from John Readman, Executive Director - People and his team of Assistant Directors, Dan Barton for schools, Lynn Berryman for social care and Fiona Musgrave for early help and partnerships.

We also received an annual update on the Youth Justice Strategy and successfully raised concerns with Cabinet about school catchments which has been responded to positively.

In the spring of 2021, we will be focusing on child exploitation and inclusion at schools. We will be seeking assurances that the Council and partners understand where exploitation is taking place and are taking the right steps to tackle and prevent it. We will also be seeking assurances that our most vulnerable learners are not losing out due to the disruption caused by Covid-19.

Hopefully in 2021 we will be able to enter a period of Covid-19 recovery and that the children's system is in a strong place to support children through the process.



Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board



Councillor Stan Collins, Chair of Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board

The Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board has responded well and continued scrutiny activity as soon as possible while the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to impact all significantly. Key areas of focus include:

- Climate change - the board has received information and had the opportunity to question officers on the partnership working that is taking place to achieve the net zero carbon county targets. Members welcomed the opportunity to look at and fully understand the partnership work and the Council's role within that. Going forward all members will have the opportunity to be involved with the Carbon Literacy programme being rolled out.
- Response to COVID-19 – the Board received a presentation and report from the Customer and Community Services on the work the directorate has done to support communities since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Members were positive regarding the progress and questioned the Assistant Director on performance to ensure ambitious targets are in place.
- Response to concurrent events – The Chief Fire Officer presented and provided reports to the Board to provide assurance that measures and the correct structures are in place to enable effective response to emergencies in the face of concurrent events. Particularly given the nature of current restrictions in place such as social distancing should evacuation of any residents be necessary.

Key areas of focus during 2020/21:

- Highways Asset Management Strategy
- Climate Change
- Response to Covid-19 from Customer and Community Services
- The organisations ability to respond to concurrent events.
- Social and physical infrastructure (including digital infrastructure strategy)

- Social and physical infrastructure was explored in depth by the task and finish group looking at infrastructure and the barriers faced with new developments

The Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board has had a wide remit, and this is reflected in the varied work programmes of the last four years.

Areas that the Communities and Place Board have impacted throughout this time include:

- Digital offer for highways customers
- CFRS improvement activity following inspection
- Improvement in the quality of equality impact assessments
- Customer training for staff
- Increase in reuse of goods that would have previously been disposed of
- Monitoring and understanding impact of an EU exit specifically around waste management.

The Board have developed a long term workplan looking at economy and environment, communities, CFRS and resilience to ensure that there is a varied work programme enabling scrutiny of the council's commitment to the communities and places of Cumbria. Going forward, strong links across the scrutiny advisory board will be maintained and strengthened to ensure a whole system view on topics where appropriate.



Key areas of focus during 2020/21:

- Impact of Covid-19 on Adult Social Care Provision
- Changes to hospital discharge arrangements
- Safeguarding during the pandemic

Adults Scrutiny Advisory Board



Councillor Mark Wilson, Chair Adults' Scrutiny Advisory Board

The Adult's Board's focus over the last twelve months has understandably been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Adult Social Care. This has remained a top Council priority and Board have been keen to ensure close joint working would continue with health colleagues in both acute Trusts. I'd like to thank John Readman and his team for providing the Board and wider Members regular updates on the position of Adult Social Care.

The rapid changes to discharge arrangements during the response to Covid-19 has been something the Board has been keeping particularly close attention to. We have looked to provide oversight and assurance that the mechanisms were and are in place to make sure all admissions to care homes, extra care housing and supported living services were being managed appropriately and safely. The Board has looked to capture key learning which would be built upon to develop future hospital discharge arrangements.

From the initial lockdown in March 2020 there were significant changes to a range of provision. The Board have been focused on the individuals and families affected and how social workers and providers had been in regular contact with individuals and families to review support. We have been keen to see examples of alternative methods of keeping people connected and have sought assurances that where additional support was required, due to an escalating situation, this had been prioritised.

As I write the testing and vaccine roll out is underway for home care staff alongside care and nursing home staff. The Board is closely examining the implementation of plans put in place to have the same level of access across the health and social care system.

As the Board has always done, we have continued to undertake an in-depth analysis of adult safeguarding activity throughout the pandemic looking at progress against the key areas of performance and the actions planned to strengthen and consolidate improvements in Adult Safeguarding, and we are pleased to have received regular safeguarding reports. Members lines of enquiry have centred around the reduction of abuse figures and abuse being hidden during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the courageous, creative, determined and resilient staff in the Social Care Sector, the NHS, the Independent Sector and the County Council workforce.



Key areas of focus during 2020/21:

- Covid-19 pandemic response
- Consideration of temporary service changes
- Mental Health impact of the pandemic on the community and how services are adapting to address increase in demand

Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Claire Driver, Chair Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee

The Committee has understandably focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, when close Scrutiny of the Health and Care Systems in Cumbria have arguably never been more required, but has been perhaps more challenging to undertake than ever.

The pandemic has necessitated rapid and unforeseen changes to the provision of health and care services, and these have been coupled with economic and lifestyle changes which potentially affect wellbeing in a much broader sense.

Many of these service changes are temporary – driven by the pandemic and envisaged as being in place only for its duration. Defining temporary in an entirely novel situation is, however, enormously complicated.

The Committee has continued to function effectively through the year whilst working very differently, with an increased number of shorter meetings to consider specific proposals and track the response to the pandemic. The focus on partnership working, and on building trust between NHS leaders and Scrutiny Members, has been key to being able to do this effectively.

We have tried to give oversight of the system response to Covid-19, the Health and Care Systems have obviously been and still are engaged in a significant amount of activity relating to the operational emergency response. The Committee could not second guess this response or seek to “oversee” it – partners were and are moving fast and acting accordingly. But what we could do and tried to do was consider how well partners were working together, overseeing the systems that contribute to smooth, effective decision-making, and bringing influence to bear on disagreements or blockages.

The challenge of Covid-19 has united the Health and Care Systems in Cumbria behind a common goal. In the future there are many aspects of this approach we would be looking to build on. Health Scrutiny can help to provide an enabling role in this particularly around a shared commitment to challenging health inequality.



Councillor Bill Wearing, Chair of LEP Scrutiny Board Committee

Key areas of focus during 2020/21:

- LEP Plans and contribution for economic recovery in Cumbria

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Scrutiny Board

2020/21 has been the first full year of LEP Scrutiny hosted by Cumbria County Council with representatives from all District Councils. The partnership working between the County Council, LEP and the Districts has led to effective arrangements becoming embedded and valuable scrutiny being undertaken.

The LEP Board meets twice yearly and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic the Boards workplan was amended to ensure focus was given to scrutinising the plans in place from the LEP in response to the changing picture Covid-19 has created.

The Board requested therefore, that in September 2020 they could see:

- The funding landscape overview
- A plan for Cumbria's economic recovery: Restart, Reboot, Rethink and
- Information regarding transitions for young people and how LEP are supporting.

In March 2021 the Chief Executive and Chair of the LEP attended to meeting to ensure members were up to date on the following areas:

- Restart, Reboot, Rethink – Implementation update
- EU Exit Transition Support
- LEP Overview

These items were requested so that the Board could be assured that the LEP were fulfilling the great need for business in Cumbria to be supported at this time of uncertainty due to the UK's exit from the EU and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board has effectively scrutinised LEP plans with the focus being at a strategic level as set out at the outset. Links with Chief Executive of the LEP remain strong and the partnership working has ensured that scrutiny are able to provide added value, which we will continue to build on throughout 2021/22.



Councillor William McEwan, Chair Cumbria Police and Crime Panel

Other Scrutiny Bodies

Cumbria Police and Crime Panel

The Police and Crime Panel is a joint committee comprising Members from the County Council, all of the District Councils and independent members. The role of the Panel is to hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account for the delivery of Policing and Community Safety in Cumbria.

The Panel carries out a wide range of activity that has contributed to the delivery of a safe and secure Cumbria. One of the Panels main activities is to scrutinise both the Commissioners budget and his Police and Crime Plan. This Panel provides robust challenge contributing towards the Commissioner delivering a period of efficiencies within the Constabulary which has prioritised services to the people of Cumbria.

The Panel has a number of statutory functions which include:

- Annual Scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Precept;
- Dealing with both compliments and complaints about the Police and Crime Commissioner;
- Holding a confirmation hearing on the appointment of the Chief Executive and other senior positions within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel has continued its own programme of development during the past year. The national PCP conference was held online this year in November and was attended by Members and officers from Cumbria. The conference provides an opportunity to share ideas with other areas and panel Members and officers.

A number of important challenges were identified including the ongoing pressure facing police forces across the country from the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the increasing demand around unseen policing such as tackling cyber-crime and counter terrorism.

Key areas of focus during 2019/20

- Impact of Covid Pandemic on policing
- Policing Council Tax Precept
- Commissioner's Annual Report
- Recruitment of 2 new Independent Panel Members

Commissioner's Annual Report

In October 2020 The Panel received the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2019-20. Members received additional information with regards to the current pandemic. The Commissioner informed the Panel that the Force had been involved in enforcement and assistance during the lockdown in March and April highlighting the increasing challenges the Constabulary is facing as crime returned to normal levels.

The report highlighted other key success over the year such as the successful programme to tackle county lines drug trafficking gangs, the mini police campaigns working with 30 schools across the county and significant improvements to the technology at the police control room and 101 service.

Panel welcomed the report and noted the continued high performance against the objectives of the plan despite the challenges presented to policing by the Covid pandemic.

Two New Independent Panel Members

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 requires Panels to appoint two non-political independent members. Cumbria Police and Crime Panel has had two such members appointed since its inception in 2012.

The appointment of independent co-optees provides an opportunity to readjust the experience, knowledge and skills available across the membership of the panel and help the Panel to effectively challenge and support the work of the Commissioner.

Cumbria PCPs 2 Independent Members have come to the end of their terms, so the Panel has been seeking two new recruits. Following a robust recruitment process two new Members have been recommended and appointed by the Panel to begin in January 2021. Jonathan Little and Ruth Hunter joined the Panel in January 2021.

Setting of the 2021/22 Policing Council Tax Precept

Funding for policing does not all come from a central government grant. A percentage is raised through local taxation as a precept of council tax. In December 2020 the government announced that Police and Crime Commissioners could increase the council tax precept by up to £15 per year for a Band D property.

As part of setting the council tax precept for policing for 2021/22 the Commissioner consults the Police and Crime Panel. In Cumbria the Commissioner chose to raise the precept by £6.57 annually for a band D property (a rise of 2.47%).

The Panel unanimously agreed that the precept rise of 2.47% be supported without qualification.

Looking ahead

The Panel is aware of the significant challenges facing the Commissioner going forward. Policing will need to adapt and evolve to these challenges. The Panel will continue to work closely with the Commissioner as the next Cumbria Police and Crime Plan starts to be refreshed during 2021.

Case Studies

Whilst Scrutiny is regularly engaged in the overview and challenge it delivers through Advisory Boards and Committees, Members also have the opportunity to share their insight on thematic or specialist issues which may have a particular impact on the Council's strategic or operational approach.

A number of case studies are provided in this report to illustrate the type of work Scrutiny is involved in.



Case Study One: Future of local government in Cumbria – locality models and structures

What did Scrutiny do?

The Council's Cabinet considered a high-level, initial proposal for a local government reform submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 3 September 2020. At a non-executive Member session on the 19 August 2020, Members contributed their suggestions on areas of focus for scrutiny activity in relation to local government reform. Members were supportive of the establishment of a Task and Finish Group into potential locality arrangements, particularly mechanisms for effective engagement, decision-making, design, and the delivery of services in communities.

Task and Finish Group Members considered different models of public sector community devolution, particularly around strengthening the role of town and parish councils. They also shared learning from other unitary authority areas including Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire and Durham, and heard from local partners including the NHS, District Councils and officers working with communities.

Recommendations included: principles to consider when developing a locality model; an approach to strengthening the role of town and parish councils; and issues which Cabinet could consider seeking Scrutiny's input into further down the line. This included the future role of the Councillor, equalities and localisation impacts on children, families, and adult social care. This will be a continuing piece of work for Scrutiny with input into the models being consulted upon by Government before and after it makes its decision in the summer.

What is the impact for Cumbria?

The discussions that have taken place on the future of local government in Cumbria have been within the context of the emerging aspirations from the UK Government to pursue a 'levelling up' agenda across regions. Cumbria County Council submitted a proposal for a single unitary organisation in December 2020 to Government. In whichever shape and form local government reform proceeds, the recommendations from Scrutiny will help to guide the way forward for engaging and working with communities in Cumbria.



Case Study Two: Post-covid ways of working

What did Scrutiny do?

In November 2020, Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) commissioned a Task and Finish Group to focus on the County Council's Post-covid ways of working. A key element of the commission was to build in effective future ways of working due to the pandemic. Members focused on the health and wellbeing impacts on staff, considered the aspects of new ways of working that could be embedded into future workforce planning, and looked at the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's customers.

Key findings included: the mental health and wellbeing impact on staff has been high with the stresses of the pandemic itself and resulting changes to working practices; policy will need to be re-thought in terms of being 'Covid-proof' in the future such as new working practices including home working, and re-thinking the future of the workplace for example office layouts as well as future ICT software support and training.

The recommendations emphasised Members' findings about:

- The importance of having a strategic plan clearly setting out future ways of working, how they are to implemented and embedded, and the support that will be put in place for Members and staff;
- The prioritisation of health and wellbeing in developing those plans, and obtaining a real understanding of impacts through proper engagement with staff and Members, and;
- The critical role of Members in developing those plans.
- All recommendations were agreed by Cabinet.

What is the impact for Cumbria?

The Group felt that this was the start of an ongoing conversation on these critical issues for the future. This was a piece of work carried out within short timescales, and there are opportunities for further Scrutiny work on engagement in the development of plans and retaining a focus on issues including health and wellbeing support, equality of opportunity and access, and staff and Member engagement.





Case Study Three: Cumbria Health Scrutiny – Impact of the pandemic on mental health

What did Scrutiny do?

As part of the planning for the February meeting of Cumbria Health Scrutiny, Members were very keen to get the voice of the patient heard as part of the consideration of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on mental health and the mental health services in North and South Cumbria. The Committee worked with Healthwatch to identify individuals who had accessed mental health services during the pandemic, and who would be willing to share their experiences. This helped Members shape and direct their lines of enquiry to the NHS Trusts delivering mental health services in the county. This culminated in a recorded video of interviews with those service users being fed into the meeting which provided Members with some powerful context to hold senior officers to the action they needed to implement to improve services.

What is the impact for Cumbria?

The work with Healthwatch identified a number of issues with the Mental Health Crisis Teams particularly in North Cumbria which hadn't previously been recognised by the Trusts. Continuing work is being undertaken on ensuring the feedback from service users is reflected back at a Trust Board level and senior leaders are more connected with the frontline delivery of services.





Case Study Four: Provision of infrastructure to support new developments

What did Scrutiny do?

The scope for this activity was agreed by Cabinet at the beginning of 2020, following delays due to the pandemic. The group reconvened in the autumn and the work was completed for December 2020 and taken to Cabinet in March 2021.

This activity was taking place at the same time as the Task and Finish activity regarding the future of local government in Cumbria – locality models and structures. Therefore, representatives from each group met to discuss and ensure learning could be shared across the two pieces of work, strengthening both and evidencing effective joint working across scrutiny activity.

Recommendations adopted by Cabinet were:

- Early engagement with Local Planning Authorities in the development of the local plan is essential in securing contributions for social and physical infrastructure.
- Cumbria County Council should explore the possible structures around planning in order to determine the most effective ways of securing contributions. This may be addressed as part of a larger programme of local government reorganisation and therefore the recommendation would be that as part of that process, planning is thoroughly explored.
- Strengthened dialogue between Members and Cumbria County Council's planning response officers may help to identify infrastructure requirements on receipt of a planning application, given Member's knowledge of their communities. This should include training for Members and their inclusion in the circulation of planning lists. To promote greater involvement of Members in the planning process it would be useful for a demonstration to all local committees of the new CCC ModernGov planning database.
- Planning authorities should be asked not to use conditions which provide loopholes for developers to evade/avoid their obligations e.g. building a classroom when 200 homes have been built where the developer then stops at 198. The consent should include thorough detail of the specific contributions that will be needed to support physical and social infrastructure. Performance monitoring of County Council recommendations to Local Planning Authorities and collection of infrastructure contributions should be carried out.
- Cumbria County Council, as the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA), should set out the flood alleviation and drainage design requirements at the time a site is included as an allocated development site in the Local Plan.

What is the impact for Cumbria?

Going forward the recommendations have the potential to enhance the delivery of the Council's role as Planning Authority and as a statutory consultee to the Local Planning Authorities in the regard. The planning system is significantly complex exacerbated by current the two-tier system, some of the recommendations could help to simplify these processes.

Scrutiny's Engagement in Strategic Planning

Scrutiny's engagement in the 2020/21 Strategic Planning process has been an ongoing dialogue which has been focused on two engagement sessions. Engagement with Scrutiny Members took place on 6 October 2020 when Members received updates on the context for Strategic and Budget Planning and the latest budget position from the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance. This was followed by a further session to which all non-executive Members of the Council were invited held on 24 November.

Members received updates from the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Director of Finance and received further information on budget proposals from the Executive Director – People, the Executive Director – Corporate, Customer and Community Services, and the Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure. Members then discussed the proposals which informed the response and feedback from Scrutiny that the Chair of Scrutiny Management Board then presented to Cabinet at their December 2020 meeting.

Scrutiny's feedback formed six recommendations which included a range of issues including the significant levels of uncertainty the Council is currently facing in terms of:

- Future finance and other key issues;
- The recognition that community and local knowledge are critical in ensuring that the system can respond quickly and effectively to those most in need;
- The importance of the Council's leadership of place role, with Cumbria as an innovative, sustainable and green destination for tourism and investment; and
- The importance of delivering quality front line service in the most effective and efficient way, spanning across both adults and children's health and social care.

All six recommendations were accepted by Cabinet at their December 2020 meeting.

Call In

No call-ins of Cabinet decisions were formally considered by Scrutiny Management Board over 2020-21.

Going Forward: The Scrutiny Development Plan

Members considered a more streamlined and refreshed Scrutiny Development Plan at the Scrutiny Management Board meeting in September 2020. This was agreed and is more focused on key development priorities including:

- Promotion - Scrutiny's role and purpose is well communicated and the role of Scrutiny is highly valued in the wider organisation and in the community and with partners.
- Cross Scrutiny Working - Scrutiny committee's work is well coordinated and making best use of resources with a consistent approach to shortlisting topics.
- Scrutiny Support - closer and earlier scrutiny involvement in policy formation and alignment of corporate work programmes is enabled through an integrated model of scrutiny support.

Going forward, the Scrutiny Development Plan will help to support Members to continue to prioritise the needs of the community throughout all Scrutiny activity, as Cumbria moves through and recovers from the impacts seen by the pandemic.

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