

# **Cumbria County Council**

*Six month review*

*Council Plan 2009-12*

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## **Six month review**

Earlier this year the County Council published its Council Plan – outlining our priorities for the year ahead.

We set out our plans for tackling inequalities in health, wealth and opportunity across Cumbria and showed how we aim to narrow the gap between the best and the worst. In particular, at a time of mounting economic crisis, we set out in detail how we plan to focus our energy on tackling poverty and the devastating impact it can have on our communities.

Six months on we believe it is important to let you know how we are getting on.

## Our focus on tackling poverty

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We committed ourselves to putting the needs of people living in poverty at the centre of all the decisions we take. We want to champion the cause of those who are most at risk during the economic downturn.

Poverty is affecting the lives of people across all parts of Cumbria. Low incomes limit opportunities and prospects for children and young people, damage the quality of life for families and ultimately harm the long term health and life expectancy for too many Cumbrians.

We put in place a number of critical projects to help get to grips with poverty:

### ***We said***

**We would develop an anti-poverty strategy and work with our partners to make it happen.**

### ***We have***

A comprehensive anti-poverty strategy and a robust action plan are now in place. A key priority has been to keep council tax increases low whilst maintaining service in those areas where people need them most. Cumbria council tax increase of 2.5% was the lowest since council tax was introduced in 1993. This has been achieved by driving greater efficiency within the council.

### ***We will***

Continue to take action against poverty and continue to ensure that the council provides value for money for our communities. The council will deliver a balanced budget that allows us to deliver high quality services in an affordable manner which keeps council tax increases to a minimum.

### ***We said***

**We would reintroduce school clothing grants to help those children in greatest need**

### ***We have***

Since June the families of 7,344 schoolchildren have received school clothing grants worth £25 per year for primary children and £35 per year for secondary school students. The grant is automatically available to any child who is entitled to a free school meal. The system has been streamlined so that parents who qualify for school meals and uniform grants only have to put in a single application. An information campaign

was carried out to make sure that everyone who was eligible for a grant knew how to take up their entitlement.

***We will***

The council has allocated £275,000 for school uniform grants in its budget for the next two years to continue to support who are facing financial hardship.

***We said***

**We would invest in debt management advice and credit unions to provide support and help people to sort out their debt problems.**

***We have***

Thanks to council funding, over 1800 people have received money advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau. Many more have benefited from information on money advice and debt as part of our regular community meetings such as neighbourhood forums. Working with a host of partners we have helped to promote and develop credit unions across the county, and our Trading Standards team have been at the forefront of cracking down on illegal money lenders and loan sharks.

***We will***

Build on this promising start – by helping set up new credit unions across the whole county and increasing membership of credit unions by a third in the year ahead - providing safe and reliable help for people with financial worries and keeping them out of the clutches of unscrupulous lenders.

***We said***

**We would campaign to increase the uptake of free school meals.**

***We have***

As the result of a high profile publicity campaign 7,415 school meal grants have been made this year compared to 6,798 last year. The poster campaign hit schools and children's centres across the county together with briefings and letters to parents. The campaign challenged the stigma which can sometimes exist around free school meals and ensured that anyone who needed help understood how to apply.

***We will***

The council plans to continue its campaign over the next school year and to reviewing the administration of grants to see where improvements can be made.

## **Better ....council services connected to people and places**

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We want to be a modern high performing council that is in touch with local people and which responds to their different needs in a way which delivers excellent value for money.

We are committed to making sure that our staff have the tools they need to provide excellent service and do their job to the very best of their ability. By working with our partners we will improve the quality of life for everyone in Cumbria and, together, we will provide a strong voice for our county.

There are some important projects we have put in place to improve our organisation:

### ***We said***

**We would implement single status and job evaluation - to create a pay and reward structure which rewards staff fairly for doing a good job.**

### ***We have***

Over 2000 council staff have received offers from the council to settle longstanding equal pay claims. The offers follow constructive negotiations with Trade Unions. The council believes it is important to give claimants financial security by making an offer now rather than allowing matters to drag on through Employment Tribunals. If claimants accept the settlement they could have cash in their pockets before Christmas.

### ***We will***

Continue to progress job evaluation and single status issues to develop a pay and reward structure which ensure that our employees are paid fairly for the work they do.

### ***We said***

**We would create better places for work - providing office accommodation which supports modern ways of working and makes the most effective use of space.**

### ***We have***

Developed a pilot project in Whitehaven which will see staff move from a range of outdated accommodation across the town which is no longer fit for purpose into a single modern office building. The new working environment will make the most efficient use of space and offer workspaces which meet the needs of our staff and help them do their jobs more effectively.

***We will***

We have also issued a notice inviting developers to work on a new headquarters building in Carlisle - allowing us to create further efficient, fit for purpose office space, and allowing us to rationalise the large number of outmoded buildings the council currently uses across the city.

***We said***

**We would improve customer access to make it easier for people to use our services and make sure they experience a high level of customer care.**

***We have***

We have joined forces with other organisations in Cumbria to set up 'Local Link' offices across the county. So far we have opened 12 Local Links in places as far apart as Alston and Aspatria, Longtown and Cleator Moor. Working together means we can be more cost effective - operating out of one building rather than lots of different council offices. And, in many cases, pooling our resources has meant that we've been able to make our services even better, such as extending the opening hours of libraries, and providing useful facilities like meeting rooms and video conferencing to local communities.

***We will***

We have firm plans to open another eight Local Links over the next year – so look out for one near you soon! We are also working with Carlisle and Allerdale council to develop plans for a single joined up telephone contact centre for all council services – and we are making more and more of our services available on our website.

***We said***

**We would introduce E-procurement - a modern and effective system for purchasing goods and services and getting the best deal for local taxpayers.**

***We have***

We have saved local tax-payers around £1 million by implementing the e-procurement system across every Directorate, transforming the way the Council requisitions, orders and pays for our goods, works and services. We have developed a Sustainable Procurement Strategy for the Council, and have implemented an electronic purchase-to-pay system across all Council Directorates, which will help us buy goods and services in a more cost effective way.

***We will***

Use the e-procurement system to further refine our business process and to identify and deliver cashable efficiency savings. We will progress the required work programme to effectively manage the transition from Capita to new service arrangements post January 2011, including the positive management of the current contract. We will follow-through on the service review underway in Highways, introducing changes and improvements where possible, and will firmly performance manage the improvement programme in place with Agilisys. Finally, we will effectively implement the new sustainable procurement strategy, which will help ensure that both value for money and improved outcomes, where possible using Cumbrian businesses, are achieved.

***We said***

**We would take all the action necessary to make sure the council achieves level 5 of the Equality and Diversity Standard by 2012.**

***We have***

We are finding out what people from diverse backgrounds think about Council services and life in Cumbria through a targeted community engagement programme. We have developed the Workstart programme to increase the numbers of people who are disabled or lone parents working for the Council. We have secured two year funding from Government Office North West to address the impacts of migration on public services. NHS Cumbria has commissioned the County Council to provide a joined up Equality service, and the County Council through Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership funding is working with all six District Councils to achieve equality for all.

***We will***

Complete Equality Impact Assessments across all areas of the Council, set narrowing the gap targets in Directorate, Unit and Team plans for 2010, and then set up projects to address outstanding areas of inequality, thereby working towards Equality for All.

## **Wealthier..... a sustainable and prosperous economy**

We want to be the fastest growing economy in England, making the most of our world class landscape and our energy, delivering jobs and world class skills and training to combat worklessness. We will support development of a thriving, engaged and competitive business sector that provides high quality employment opportunities. We will concentrate efforts on those places in greatest need, and on creating opportunities which reduce the need for young people to leave the county.

To help us achieve this vision we set out a number of critical projects:

### ***We said***

**We would deliver the Carlisle Northern Development Route to support the economic vitality of Carlisle and Cumbria.**

### ***We have***

Our partners Connect Roads are now on site and construction is underway. The five mile road will be fully open in April 2012. Despite the impact of global economic turbulence on the banking sector, which threatened the project's finances, the county council has been able to conclude contract negotiations on the development of this vital road link.

### ***We will***

Continue to work with our partners on this project into the future and help maximize the opportunities that this major project brings to the county as a whole.

### ***We said***

**We would make sure that the council pays invoices from small businesses earlier to help them with their cash flow during the recession.**

### ***We have***

Since April this year, invoices from small businesses are being paid on average within 18.6 days. This means that local businesses get cash owed to them by the council back into the business quicker – a big help when the economy is feeling the strain.

### ***We will***

The Council is committed to continuing to support our communities and we plan to ensure that these invoices continue to be paid rapidly as a matter of priority.

## **Healthier ... improving the health and well-being of adults**

We want people to enjoy active, healthy and fulfilling lives. We will value the contribution made by people of all ages. We will empower Cumbria's older population to live independently and maximise the control they have over decisions that affect them.

With our partners in health, the independent and voluntary sectors we will ensure people have high quality modern services, which promote independence and offer choice. We will help tackle health inequalities across Cumbria and work with partners to reduce the causes of poor health such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

To help achieve this vision we have a number of critical projects over the next three years:

### ***We said***

**We would continue to help people quit smoking, encourage healthy eating in schools, work with partners to reduce teenage pregnancies, reduce excessive drinking and drug abuse.**

### ***We have***

Run a series of one day courses in partnership with Cumbria Colleges to identify how to provide a range of healthier foods and meals, as well as ideas to promote healthier food choices within schools. As a result, 14 kitchen team leaders from across north and east Cumbria have been awarded Healthier School Meals Award Level 1, a nationally recognised qualification. We have also launched a Kids Kitchen promotion within all primary schools served by our Premises Unit, highlighting healthy eating and activity within school, and life-long healthy eating and living. And we commissioned a theatre company to perform at six secondary schools in Carlisle and Penrith to drive home the dangers of alcohol misuse.

### ***We will***

Continue to work with partner organisations and schools to promote healthy eating and a healthy life style, and to work with staff to ensure they have the right tools and training to carry on doing a good job. Number of people who have quit smoking.

### ***We said***

**We would continue to provide more personalised services to increase choice and control for older people and vulnerable adults.**

### ***We have***

Person centred planning within Cumbria Care has been extremely successful, and is making a difference to quality of life. The care Quality Commission (CQC) has

highlighted this as a particular strength which encourages an approach to meeting needs of individuals. We have continued to communicate the benefits of personalisation with providers - through forums and trade fairs. This has helped to make sure that assessments are more likely to result in support tailored to meet individual needs – addressing quality of life as well as care requirements. The impact of this approach is best explained by describing how it can lead to improved outcomes for individuals. “Mrs A”, a previously vibrant and sociable lady, came to live at a Cumbria Care home. Her family felt that in the course of the move she had somehow ‘lost her sparkle’. As part of the roll-out of the new holistic approach “Mrs A” was given a person-centered plan, where she and her care-worker were able to discuss everything that made her life her own. During this process the care-worker discovered that “Mrs A” had always worn make-up and styled her hair every morning. But since coming into the home she had not realized that this was something she was allowed to do – so had not been able to wear make-up at all. Once the carers in the home realised this, Mrs A had help to put on her make-up and do her hair every morning, as part of her regular routine. Her family were delighted, immediately her ‘sparkle’ returned and she became her old self again. This positive outcome would never have happened if discussions had focused only on care requirements or programmed services and activities in the home.

### ***We will***

Continue to increase the number of service users with a person-centred plan. We will also launch Individual Budgets in November, allowing more service users and carers to take advantage of receiving an actual agreed amount of money to determine their own care, as an alternative to Social Care arranging services.

### ***We said***

**We would work with the voluntary sector to improve early intervention and the prevention of harm.**

### ***We have***

Our training of providers has had the effect of raising awareness of the issues associated with preventing harm, ensuring providers are getting better at recognising safeguarding issues. This is making a difference to some of the people using our services – for example the case of one gentleman who was being exploited, bullied and harassed by his neighbour. All key parties worked together to as part of the Safeguarding Process, including Social Services, the care provider and the housing provider. The gentleman received increased monitoring and visits from mental health services and housing support; as well as support to help manage finances and tenancy issues. In this case the gentleman was offered and accepted a move to a new tenancy, which meant the safeguarding concern was resolved and he is now safe from exploitation.

***We will***

Continue to closely monitor the instances of financial abuse as there has been an increase in the number of these cases over the past few months. Given the current economic climate we may continue to see a rise in these numbers. If it seems that this is a trend, there will be a need to raise awareness with service users and other stakeholders to be more vigilant and to report any suspected anomalies.

***We said***

**We would build a new public records Office in Carlisle.**

***We have***

Construction of the new Carlisle Records Office at Petteril Bank, Carlisle is progressing well and within budget. Lady Gillford House is being transformed thanks to a heritage Lottery Grant and County Council funding. A new, innovative and strikingly modern building will house the storage and public access areas.

***We will***

Continue with the construction programme, with planned completion in March 2010. The new Records Office is scheduled to open to the public in the late summer/early autumn of next year following the transfer of over 1 million archives from the Castle and other buildings around Carlisle.

***We said***

**We would work with partners to increase the number of people getting involved in the Arts across Cumbria.**

***We have***

Young people under the age of 26 are benefiting from free theatre tickets and further help is being provided with travel costs for more disadvantaged youngsters. We are also working with 18 cultural organizations across the county to boost audience numbers and improve venues by making them more family friendly. Thanks to our work with a host of partners, children with learning disabilities, older people in care, and people with a sensory impairment are enjoying more opportunities to get involved in arts projects. We have launched a "See It Do It" campaign to raise awareness of opportunities to engage in the arts. As part of the Cultural Olympiad – we supported the highly successful Lakes Alive programme through which thousands of people have been involved in cultural events across the county.

***We will***

Increase the level and include more targeted publicity relating to the See it Do it Campaign and involve more partner organisations to increase brand awareness. We will continue to work with partners to get more young people involved in arts and culture and by working with the 3rd Sector group we will develop the targeted projects to provided activities for those who might otherwise be excluded. We will help ensure a repeat of the hugely successful 'Lakes Alive' programme in 2010.

## Happier .... Improving the life chances of children and young people

We want the best chances for every child, young person and their family in Cumbria to ensure that all children and young people will be kept safe from harm and that they will reach their full potential.

To help achieve this we set out a number of key priorities:

### ***We said***

**We would invest in our schools through the Building Schools for the Future, Academies and Primary Strategies programmes.**

### ***We have***

The new Richard Rose Central Academy in Carlisle is now under construction. We have received approval from the Department of Children, Schools and Families for a further three further academies, in Morton, Egremont, and Barrow. The Academies are up and running – and new, modern, fit for purpose school buildings will be developed in the very near future. Detailed planning and design is well underway for these major projects.

### ***We will***

A Building Schools for the Future team has been established and is talking to stakeholders to understand the implications of a major transformational and building programme. We have firm plans to submit documents to the government to enter the BSF programme early next year aiming to complete the first phase by 2015/16. If approved BSF funding could help dramatically improve the county's school buildings over the next few years. This will be enhanced by further investment from Government.

### ***We said***

**Develop and implement the children with disabilities 'Aiming High' project with our partners.**

### ***We have***

Children with disabilities have benefited from 700 hours of additional short breaks thanks to the 'Aiming High' programme. Cumbria was able to secure the full grant for Cumbria without preconditions. We have supported the establishment of countywide and locality parents forums. We have engaged with parents and partners within the localities to help shape priorities. We have commissioned the third sector to increase local capacity.

*We will*

Secure transparent arrangements for commissioning more services informed by consultation with partners and parents; and, work with colleagues in Adult and Cultural Services and other partners to strengthen transition arrangements for young people. Ensure that further short breaks are provided during half term and school holidays.

***We said***

**We would complete the review of our safeguarding procedures and reshape our existing services so there is confidence in our ability to protect and safeguard all children in Cumbria.**

*We have*

Following the tragic case of Baby P we carried out an urgent review of child protection and safeguarding procedures in Cumbria to make sure we are doing all we can to keep children safe. With our partners in the police, health Services and other organizations we have put in place robust systems to ensure that information is shared and that our processes and protocols for keeping children safe are regularly audited and checked.

*We will*

Continue our programme of audit activity and embed this regular management activity.

## **Safer ... stronger and inclusive communities**

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We want to make sure that our communities in Cumbria are made safer, stronger and more inclusive by helping more people get involved and make a difference to the place they live, confident that everything is being done to further reduce crime, antisocial behaviour, fire deaths and road casualties.

We want Cumbria to be cohesive, empowered and active - where people from all backgrounds, cultures, ages, genders and abilities feel part of their community, able to express their individual needs and be respected.

We have set out a number of critical projects to help us achieve this vision over the next three years:

### ***We said***

**We would replace fire stations at Carlisle, Penrith, Patterdale and Workington.**

### ***We have***

Five new fire stations will be built in Cumbria as part of joint Private Finance Initiative with Merseyside and Lancashire which will see a total of 16 new community fire stations built across the north west of England. The project is currently at the tender stage, with two bidders remaining at the invitation to submit refined solutions stage. Both bidders have produced detailed designs for all the fire stations.

### ***We will***

Make sure that work starts on site by October 2010 and that all new fire stations are up and running by May 2013.

### ***We said***

**We would roll out the ‘Together We Can’ initiative to involve more people and places in important decisions.**

### ***We have***

Held a number of multi agency events across Cumbria which have given local people the opportunity to speak with service providers and get feedback on what is being done with their queries and concerns. Events such as: A Community Safety Day in Sedbergh involved participants from police, fire service, CCC, SLDC meeting with

local residents. In the Ormsgill area of Barrow there was a focus on promoting local community activities, with a community fun day, promotion of agency activities in the area and gauging the level and concerns in relation to Anti-social behavior in and around the streets.

***We will***

***Integrate more activities of this kind into the day to day work of the Council and its partner in communities to involve more people in decisions which affect them.***

***We said***

We would extend the role of Local Committees in council decision making so services are more responsive to local needs.

***We have***

Put in place arrangements to devolve decision making on a range of services that Cabinet Members agreed would be more appropriately determined and influenced at a local level. These arrangements include monitoring services delivered under contract for local youth services and money advice. Councillors are now able to discuss local needs with local people in these areas and longer term local residents will be involved in defining the service to be delivered in that area.

***We will***

***Continue to review and consider opportunities for greater devolution and review the effectiveness of existing operations.***

***We said***

We would work through and support the Cumbria Road Safety Partnership with the aim of reducing road casualties to better the targets agreed with the Department for Transport and within the Local Area Agreement. We have adopted a lifelong learning approach with particular focus on those most at risk.

***We have***

Exceeded the targets we were set during the 2008 calendar year and are optimistic that we will do even better in 2009. We have done this by offering a range of initiatives, particularly targeting young, newly qualified drivers, who are involved in a very high percentage of casualty collisions and school children to begin good road user habits early. We provide The Pass Plus scheme which gives additional driving tuition to young novice drivers across Cumbria. Over 900 young people completed their training during the 08/09 financial year and monitoring carried out earlier this year showed that at that

time only one of these had been involved in a collision that was deemed to be of their fault.

**Cycle training for school children** - The cycle proficiency syllabus has in recent years been replaced by "Bikeability" training for the 21st century. All eligible schoolchildren in Cumbria were offered the training in 2008. The training not only introduces road user safety at an early age, but also assists in achieving wider policy objectives of improving health through active lifestyles and tackling climate change through reduced car journeys.

***We will***

Continue to take the lead in refreshing the Cumbria Road Safety Strategy and Action Plans, putting a greater emphasis on influencing road user behaviour. This will strengthen partnership working beyond 2010.

## **Greener ... world class environmental quality and effective connections between people and places**

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High quality and affordable homes will be provided in the places where people want to live and work. Our public spaces will match the quality of our landscape. Transport connections will help people access jobs and services and link us to the rest of the UK and beyond.

We will find ways to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt our way of life to respond successfully to the challenges, risks and opportunities presented by climate change. We will reduce the volume of waste generated and reduce the overall impact of waste on our environment by increasing recycling rates.

To achieve this we have set out a number of key projects:

### ***We said***

**We would work with our new contractor to introduce a new environmentally friendly waste treatment service.**

### ***We have***

The council finalized contractual arrangements with its strategic waste partner Shanks in June 2009 means and the new arrangements are already making a difference. In the first three months of operation, recycling at Household Waste Recycling Centres has increased, the number of materials accepted at HWRC's has been enhanced and the foundations have already been laid for one of the two new waste treatment facilities to be built within the county.

### ***We will***

The next steps are to continue to improve the Council's 14 HWRC's and continue with the build and planning programme for the new waste facilities being built to ensure that value is derived from waste that is not recycled.

***We said***

**We would devolve resources to deliver small scale capital improvement schemes in local communities.**

***We have***

We have offered support to 84 members in their discussions with local residents and other stakeholders; and helped councillors develop these ideas into viable schemes. In the majority of cases local schemes have been identified and are being worked up to practical projects. In some cases these have already been implemented. Practical projects such as improvements to a play area in Keswick , a contribution to a Search and Rescue boat in Arnside, a new lay-by for a school in Carlisle are all making a difference to local people.

***We will***

Deliver the schemes ensuring compliance with council policy. Evaluate the local and strategic impact of investments and ensure members and local people see the difference this type of investment can make.

***We said***

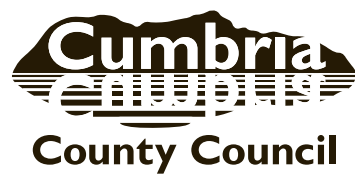
**We would be involved in the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme.**

***We have***

Cumbria faces a massive decision about whether to be part of future plans for the long term disposal of nuclear waste. The fact is that the majority of this a type of waste in the UK is currently stored at Sellafield. Cumbria must be part of the discussions with the government about long term solutions. That's why the county council has expressed an interest in being part of the debate. We are working alongside our partners in Copeland and Allerdale to make sure that there is full consultation with the community as part of the process.

***We will***

We will continue to work alongside the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme so that, at the right stage, we can make sure that Cumbria is in a position to make an informed decision on whether to remain part of the process.



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