

# One council, One vision, One voice.

---

**The case for a unitary Cumbria**



If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01228 606304.

आपके यदि कोई अन्य भाषा में या अन्य प्रारूप में (जैसे कि ऑडियो कассेट, ब्रैल या बड़े अक्षर) या किसी अन्य भाषा में इस दस्तावेज़ की आवश्यकता है, तो कृपया 01229 894401 नंबर पर कॉल करें।  
如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，  
请致电01229 894401  
Jeigu norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,  
skambinkite telefonu 01229 894401

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę zatelefonować pod numer 01229 894401  
Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,  
telefone para o 01229 894401  
Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen  
01229 894401 numaralı telefonu arayınız.

# Contents

<b>Foreword and Preface</b>	2	<b>Chapter Four</b>	45
<b>Executive Summary</b>	3	<b>The summary financial case</b>	
A sense of place	3	4.1 Overall conclusions - payback, ongoing efficiencies and translation costs	45
A new vision	3	4.2 Efficiency strategy and efficiency targets for a unitary Cumbria	46
Over governed and under led	4	4.3 Transitional costs and redundancies	48
A new one council Cumbria	5	4.4 Revenue Support Grant settlements	48
Key benefits	5	4.5 Council Tax assumptions	48
Cost effectiveness and value for money	7	4.6 Funding and use of reserves	51
Service improvement	7	4.7 Affordability	52
Making it happen	9	4.8 Risk management	52
Timeline	11		
<b>Chapter One</b>	13	<b>Chapter Five</b>	55
<b>A new vision for Cumbria. The need for transformational change.</b>		<b>How we will make it happen - transition</b>	
1.1 Strength and simplicity	13	5.1 Legal position	55
1.2 Shared priorities	17	5.2 HR issues	56
1.3 Meeting the challenge	21	5.3 Creating a new brand and corporate culture in one council Cumbria	58
<b>Chapter Two</b>	23	5.4 Senior officer structures	59
<b>Why unitary Cumbria is the answer and how it will work</b>		5.5 Putting in place the capacity to support the community model	59
2.1 The community empowerment and engagement role	23	5.6 Building one council around the customer	60
2.2 How will this be achieved	24	5.7 Creating a single shared back office	62
2.3 The strategic role - strong, effective and accountable leadership	30	5.8 Integration of ICT	62
2.4 The partnership role - integration across the public sector	32	5.9 Provision of modern and capable finance system	63
<b>Chapter Three</b>	35	5.10 Rationalisation of property assets	64
<b>How will services be better through Cumbria Council</b>		<b>Chapter Six</b>	67
3.1 Liveability, economic development and enterprise	35	<b>Statement of a broad cross section</b>	
3.2 Children, young people and families	39	6.1 Wide ranging support	67
3.3 Healthier communities and older people	40	6.2 Public Attitudes	68
3.4 Safer, stronger communities	41		
3.5 Central and support services	41	<b>Appendices</b>	73

# Foreword and Preface

## By the Leader and Group Leaders of Cumbria County Council

Life very occasionally presents an opportunity which demands our attention.

We are offered a prize so great that we have no option but to put aside our differences and come together to apply collective will to ensure opportunity does not slip from our grasp.

Cumbria stands on the edge of opportunity. An opportunity to once and for all bring the leadership, clarity and sense of purpose required to secure the county's future.

In presenting this bid we are pleased to say that political differences have been put aside. We have found unity in our common pursuit of a brighter future for our county.

Our proposals have been developed in an atmosphere of political consensus and good will – where personal and party ambitions have been in the best interests of Cumbria and its people.

We believe that our unity brings an added dimension and strength to our proposals.

Our plans for bringing local government closer to the communities it serves are radical. We will reinvigorate democracy by empowering frontline councillors to get things done, and we will devolve power and services to communities that local people recognise and understand.

We will do all this in a way which strips away confusion and duplication to deliver streamlined services built around the customer not the bureaucrat. High performing services will be delivered at a far lower cost than in the existing system.

And we will provide the vision, leadership and direction needed to help Cumbria fulfil its potential - with a world-class economy and infrastructure to match our world-class environment.

In preparing this bid we have experienced a strong sense of history in the making, and a strong sense of place. And we have invested in it our shared hopes and aspirations for the future. We are committed to continue working together to make them a reality.



Tim Stoddard  
Leader  
Cumbria County  
Council



Jack Richardson  
Conservative  
Group Leader



Joan Stocker  
Liberal Democrat  
Group Leader  
Deputy Leader  
Cumbria County  
Council



Stewart Young  
Labour  
Group Leader

# Executive Summary

## A sense of place

Cumbria is a county defined by its landscape, geography and, most importantly, its people.

Cumbrians have a strong affinity for their county and an even stronger allegiance to their own towns and villages. Our diverse county embraces many distinct communities within a single, coherent identity. Although it is a relatively recent administrative construct, it has its origins in an ancient Celtic Kingdom. The name 'Cumbria' derives from a Celtic term for compatriots. It feels like a place with a history, a unique culture and its own traditions. Cumbria has a sense of place.

Cumbria also has a very clear vision of what it could and should be, based on the unique assets at its disposal. Strategically placed, it joins the North West of England with the North East and Scotland, with road and rail networks north, south and east. Cumbria enjoys a world-class environment and landscape, presenting unrivalled opportunities for tourism, a highly motivated workforce with unique skills in nuclear and other technologies, an unsurpassed quality of life, and real communities with a thirst for civic and democratic engagement.

But Cumbria has failed to fulfil its potential. Our tourism sector underperforms. Our economic performance is weak, although improving. Pockets of severe urban and rural deprivation are found throughout the county. Our transport infrastructure is poor, and access to good quality council services inconsistent. Patches of excellence are mirrored by areas of underperformance.

There have been several attempts to modernise Cumbria's governance in the past. The conclusion every time is that a Unitary Council meets the tests, and delivers significant value for money for the taxpayer. The two-tier model is not sustainable in a county with a small population in a large area. Sparsity and remoteness add to the cost of services. The burden of seven different bureaucracies cannot be supported by a low council tax base, especially

when fiercely independent communities compete for scarce resources. A strong single council is the only way to bring coherence, efficiency and equity to local government. It will take the best of both current tiers to form an entirely new organisation. Not a takeover by either tier, but a new way forward for Cumbria.

Our sense of place must be matched by strong public sector leadership and aspirations for our future.

## A new vision

We have a vision of a new Cumbria Council which exploits the county's strengths. It will be a unitary council that can, and must, give clear leadership and direction on the major strategic issues facing the county, including:

### **Capacity for economic prosperity and**

**regeneration:** Major regeneration initiatives such as Carlisle Renaissance and the development of Carlisle as the sub-regional capital, the West Cumbria Masterplan and the Waterfront, Barrow-In-Furness need strong leadership and capacity if they are to succeed. Across Cumbria there is a massive potential for diversification and growth in sectors as diverse as engineering, creative and digital industries and the food and drink sector. These also need drive and the ability to bring the private sector to the table as serious contributors to the process. Too often in the past, regeneration plans for Cumbria have dwindled away because of a lack of leadership, focus or understanding. A strong single unitary council will bring together the public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver change. It will strengthen Cumbria's place in the international arena, accessing global markets and encouraging investment. It will also ensure Cumbria speaks powerfully and with influence regionally, matching the capacity and focus of city regions like Manchester and Liverpool.

**Nuclear:** The nuclear industry is fundamental to the whole of Cumbria. It is a big issue that needs the

support and strategic weight of a unitary authority to lead serious negotiations which maximise the benefit of the nuclear industry to the nation and to the local community. A new unitary Cumbria will support and help secure the county's nuclear and engineering future.

**Tourism:** Cumbria is a world-class tourism destination based around the Lake District, one of the most beautiful and unique landscapes anywhere in the world. But the sector is not punching its weight. Splintered by the input of seven different authorities, it fails to add the value to our economy that 16 million annual visitors to the county should bring. Working with Cumbria Tourism, a unitary authority will help bring direction and cohesion to tourism currently hampered by fragmented marketing pulling in too many different directions.

**Education and skills:** Cumbria has the potential to be a leading learning destination which builds on our core strengths - energy and environmental technologies, tourism, and outdoor education, as well as a number of other potential growth areas. A unitary Cumbria will help and underpin the creation of the University for Cumbria – providing support to the higher and further education sector and infrastructure which is needed to make it a reality. It will also link school based, further and higher education more closely to business needs to deliver a workforce for the future.

**Farming, land management and climate change:** Cumbria can be an international centre for energy and the management of climate change based on unparalleled technical expertise in the nuclear and sustainable energy sectors. These are coupled with an environmental awareness developed through stewardship of our sensitive landscape and ecology. Cumbria also needs to benefit from opportunities from agricultural restructuring, with emphasis on sustainable land management. A clear-sighted unitary council is best equipped to give leadership on climate change, land use and sustainability – pulling these strands together to bring our vision to life, for instance using its own procurement decisions to reduce carbon dependency.

**Safer and stronger communities:** Cumbria enjoys comparatively low levels of crime, although there are significant crime hotspots associated with deprivation. Public perception of issues such as

anti-social behaviour; drug use and drug dealing are not in line with reality. To help address these issues and foster stronger communities, a single Cumbria Council must work very locally alongside the Constabulary, particularly through its Local Policing Teams.

**Capacity in the Voluntary Sector:** A unitary authority will help foster and structure our relationships with the voluntary and community sector to help us join forces in creating cohesive communities with opportunities for the young and old. Cumbria should be an exemplar for ensuring independent living for older people in our society. A unitary council can make this happen by integrating health, housing and Adult Social Care.

## ‘Over governed and under led’

There have been real efforts to make progress through joint working in the best interests of the county. There has been considerable partnership, activity; particularly through the Cumbria Strategic Partnership, to develop a strong Local Area Agreement and a shared community strategy ‘Sustainable Cumbria’.

But this has often been progress held back by the lowest common denominator, or by individual interests undermining the common good. Too often the brake applied to the wheels of change is the complexity, disjointedness and disagreement that can undermine two-tier local government. Professor Phil Thomas, who led an independent commission on democracy in Cumbria in 2006, put it very succinctly: “Cumbria is over governed and under led.”

To the citizen, local government in Cumbria is a bewildering patchwork of councils, services and access points – built around bureaucratic convenience rather than the needs of individuals and communities. Cumbria has tried hard to present a consistent voice to regional and national partners – but strategic coherence has been fragmented by local interest.

To accelerate progress, a new single unitary is the best way to bring the clarity, co-ordination and coherence essential to drive towards improved outcomes for Cumbria and its people.

Since 1974 we have all wrestled with making two-tier Cumbria work. There has been some success. But despite Herculean effort, good will and best intentions, the system has failed to realise the county's full potential. The notion of Cumbria undoubtedly works for its people, but its currently cumbersome governance does not.

## A new one council Cumbria

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a new model of local government which makes sense to local people and empowers them to make a difference to their own lives and their communities. It will reinvigorate local democracy by devolving power closer to those local communities which are meaningful and relevant to people, and by renewing the role of frontline councillors, who will have the ability to shape the places in which they live, and to get things done.

It is also an opportunity to provide joined-up services to local people, with one council responsible for all council services, the council will be clearly accountable for how it spends the council tax and national taxes that local people pay through a single set of elected local councillors.

A new model of service delivery, centred on the citizen and the community, will end the maze which customers currently have to negotiate to find the service they want. Access to services will be co-ordinated in ways which suit the customer – whether they want to walk into a front office, phone a call centre or complete a transaction online. In the new one-council Cumbria, customers will come first.

The new model will bring a clear strategic direction and shared priorities across the public sector – as one council works alongside a growing number of partners sharing the same boundary. Already these include a Cumbria Primary Care Trust, the Cumbria Constabulary and other key strategic providers such as the Lake District National Park Authority and Cumbria Vision, working together to shape Cumbria and the quality of life enjoyed by its citizens.

## Key Benefits

- **One council** - clearly accountable to the people of Cumbria, providing effective leadership and efficient services
- **One vision** - a clear, shared view of Cumbria's varied needs and how to respond effectively to them.
- **One voice** - able to speak up for Cumbria and argue for jobs, investment and resources locally, regionally and nationally
- Having one council instead of seven helps save £22.2m for council tax payers. Council tax levels will be harmonised at the lowest rate, and a unitary Cumbria will also seek to peg council tax increases at 4% or less (1% below the 5% capping level) for three years
- The £21.3m cost of change will be paid back in 2.5 years
- Stronger local democracy brought closer than ever before to people in communities that mean something to them. Community Boards with the power to run local services, empower local ownership and management of facilities, and get to grips with local priorities.
- Stronger frontline councillors – given the powers to make a difference and get things done
- Joined-up council services built around the needs of communities and citizens – not the convenience of council bureaucracy
- An end to duplication and waste, with processes, more efficient systems and saving taxpayers money and helping us to reinvest in better services
- **One strong, entirely new, council** for Cumbria that everyone understands - no more confusion about which council does what.

## Local devolution within a strategic framework

A fundamental principle of the new approach is to devolve as much power and decision making as possible to the most local level. This will reinforce the cohesion and sense of place in our communities.

The basic building blocks of the new approach are the 20-30 communities which people recognise and with which they identify. These will be the subject of extensive consultation. They range from market towns to natural communities and key service centres. Each of these places will have a council presence and be represented by a 'Community Board' to bring together frontline unitary councillors, representatives from parish and town councils and other agencies to lead the place shaping agenda.

New Cumbria councillors will be elected afresh to replace the existing 371 elected representatives. At first 84 members will undertake this role and the new council will then ask the Boundary Committee to review the number of wards. We will aim for around 100 members in total. They will be empowered to play a leadership role in the local community. Power and resources will be devolved to the local level so that Community Boards can act on the local concerns which matter most to local people – particularly in relation to 'cleaner and greener' issues.

The Community Boards will have the power, authority and capacity to support their decision making role and use a range of tools to engage and empower local people – from the well established and highly effective neighbourhood forums to interactive 21st century town hall techniques. The emphasis will be on reaching all parts of the community – particularly the traditionally hard to reach and marginalised groups who are often most dependent on public and third sector support.

## Managing transition

The new council will want to devolve to Community Boards and parish and town councils and will provide support to put enhanced capacity and governance procedures in place to help them to fulfil their new role. Some localities are already more advanced than others in this respect. For example Keswick Town Council was the first to attain Quality

Parish Council Status and has developed a Business Improvement District – making it a beacon for others to follow.

Transition will be managed by four Area Committees with a duty to establish and devolve power to the local level, and to manage a smooth transition. Overseeing this transition will be an independent commission, the Community Governance Review Board, made up of local people and able to hold the council to account for its commitment to devolve.

Four Area Committees will be established. Naming the committees will take account of consultation and historic place names like Cumberland and Westmorland:

- **Barrow** and **Carlisle** each need strong local leadership to deliver urban regeneration initiatives and long-standing problems of deprivation and related inequalities in health, housing, education and economic outcomes
- **West Cumbria** (Allerdale and Copeland) has common issues related to the decline of traditional industries and transformation around the future of Sellafield. But West Cumbria also has huge opportunities created by nuclear decommissioning, having a large skills base at a time when the challenge of cleaning up the nuclear legacy is coupled with renewed national energy policy
- And **East Cumbria** (Eden and South Lakeland) has a shared interest in developing the prosperity of market towns and countering rural sparsity as well as joining with West Cumbria in dealing with the opportunities and problems in delivering a new vision for the Lake District in partnership with the National Park Authority. East Cumbria also contains the Eden valley, an area of outstanding natural beauty, and also part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, with rural issues to the fore including affordable housing, farming and tourism.

## A strong executive acting as a single voice for Cumbria

The new unitary council will create a single executive providing strong and stable political leadership for Cumbria.

It will work alongside key strategic partners, including the new Cumbria Primary Care Trust, the North West Regional Development Agency, the Learning and Skills Council, Chamber of Commerce, County Constabulary and others, to provide a solid platform to deliver the county's agenda and improve the quality of life for our citizens.

The Executive will be indirectly elected, with the Leader appointed for a four-year term. This will allow the Leader to select from the whole body of councillors the best and most able to join the Cabinet. The Leader will also be able to design Cabinet portfolios around particular skills and abilities in a flexible way. Under the indirectly elected model, Cabinet members will be held directly responsible for performance of the whole council, and can, if necessary, be removed from office by a simple 'no confidence' vote.

The Executive will work with the Area Committees to ensure delegation of a considerable proportion of council functions to Community Boards. This will mean that the issues that matter to people most – for example, the cleaner, greener issues that happen locally – are dealt with in the local community.

Strategic issues affecting the whole county will be dealt with by the Executive, which will provide a strong regional, national and international voice for Cumbria on major issues like housing, transport, cultural development and spatial planning.

## Cost effectiveness and value for money

The model for Cumbria will be underpinned by shared services, particularly in the back-office and a drive for maximum efficiency.

The financial business case demonstrates significant value for money benefits for a unitary Cumbria. This makes it possible to reduce council tax and redirect money into services.

Once the unitary council is fully established, there will be recurring annual efficiencies of £22.2m, largely from rationalisation of corporate and democratic core costs, central services and back-

office support. The cost of transition is estimated at £21.3m, including redundancy costs of £13.2m. Half the efficiencies would be returned to the council tax payer through lower council taxes, with the other efficiencies being available for investment in frontline services.

A unitary Cumbria will need to invest in ensuring that councillors are appropriately supported to undertake their new role, and that there are effective arrangements in place for locality working. The financial model includes investment for this purpose.

Taking account of the scheduling of transitional costs and the time required to deliver efficiencies, all transitional costs would be recovered within 2.5 years.

To ensure that efficiencies are shared with council tax payers, council tax levels will be harmonised at the lowest rate in Cumbria (Allerdale), resulting in a saving for council tax payers of £5.1m.

In addition, a unitary Cumbria will seek to peg council tax increases below the maximum 5% capping level for three years. For illustration, holding council tax increases at 1% below capping would cost the council £2m in the first year, £4m in the second year and £6m in the third year. Cumbria Council would be able to set council tax a shade below 4%, using half the efficiencies identified in the financial case for reducing council tax.

The experience of existing and new commercial partners will be used in developing new cost-effective models of service delivery. The benefits of such partnerships have been acknowledged as significant in driving the efficiency agenda and making savings.

## Service improvement

A fundamental principle of the new authority is that it will lead the improvement of local government services. This will happen through an entirely new council taking the best of both existing tiers, but removing the middle of two-tier government, making improvements that are tangible to citizens.

## Liveability

Significant and obvious improvements can be made in the quality of life issues which have a real impact on local people.

Environmental services will be rationalised to create multi-functional teams designed to meet community needs and aspirations. They will be able to respond quickly and have the ability to work across issues impacting on community safety - noise nuisance, pest control, air monitoring and food hygiene.

The new council will build on and accelerate the progress made by the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership. A Cumbria Council will develop an integrated street cleaning service. The new service will bring together and clarify the existing array of contracts and service standards to provide a coherent service which is responsive to local needs.

Cultural services such as libraries, museums and galleries, sports and recreation facilities, archives and the arts will combine through a cohesive cultural strategy. This will shape services that address both local needs and the strategic and economic opportunities offered by cultural tourism.

Highways and transportation services will come together with common policies and standards achieved through better contract management. This will build upon the recognised success of the existing Cumbria Highways partnership with Capita and Amey. The parish handyman/lengthsman will be promoted to parish and town councils together with local response teams as the basis for local management of the street scene.

Planning and development work will be integrated with robust development control. Planning and economic policy will be aligned and sensitive to environmental initiatives and community needs. Service delivery will be at a local level. People and businesses will be able to access the full range of services through a one-stop shop for development.

Environmental Health and Trading Standards will be integrated and will work closely with housing, providing a single robust service, backed up by trading standards direct - a service developed by the county council and its ICT partner Agilisys.

The unitary authority will build on the joint working that has established a single housing strategy to help address Cumbria's need for more and better quality housing, integrating fully with Adult Social Care to promote independence and choice.

## Children young people and families

The Cumbria Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has already demonstrated the benefits of inter-agency working to a shared agenda on a countywide basis to improve outcomes for young people in Cumbria.

A unitary Cumbria will build on the improvements noted in the recent Joint Area Review and reduce the impact of organisational boundaries, generate efficiencies, enhance involvement in front line delivery and create more scope for local delivery of services. It will generate better support for homeless families and young people through integration of housing, social care and health needs.

These improvements in children's services will be accelerated through better locality working.

## Older and vulnerable people, health and well being

Cumbria faces significant financial pressures with a growing elderly and disabled population. It also has the opportunity to benefit from the skills and commitment of the voluntary sector to working with increasingly active older people.

A strong strategic council will enable partners to plan together to meet these growing needs. It will be able to work with the new Cumbria PCT to improve public health, linking currently disparate services like leisure, recreation, housing and Adult Social Care. It is vital that services are commissioned jointly and performance managed to be responsive locally.

## Community safety, fire and rescue

Co-terminosity of local authority, Constabulary and PCT boundaries is the key to developing inter-agency working across this agenda.

## The economy

Cumbria needs to be influential and speak with one voice regionally, nationally and globally. Working with the North West Regional Development Agency (NWRDA) and the private sector, the County Council has worked to create Cumbria Vision, a private sector company to lead economic regeneration. A single, powerful and influential council will champion Cumbria's interests in partnership with Cumbria Vision.

Action will be achieved through a combination of transformational and local projects aimed at securing improvement in our most deprived areas. Cumbria Council will provide the infrastructure to enable economic and social development and cohesion. The new Council will look outwards to other countywide bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce to promote a coordinated approach to economic development.

The delivery of the Cumbria Economic Regeneration Action Plan (CERAP) complements the Local Area Agreement outcomes and will be achieved through three major economic drivers – business enterprise and employment, education and skills and infrastructure improvement. The ability to speak with one voice will become more and more critical as EU and UK regeneration funding becomes more targeted and competitive. Cumbria will, more than ever wish to take ownership and deliver its economic priorities. It will, for instance be able to fully integrate planning and housing policy with infrastructure improvements for regeneration.

## Central and support services

As well as making improvements to frontline services, the new unitary council will achieve efficiencies and radical service improvements by bringing together back office and support services. Systems are currently spread across the seven current local government structures and also the Lake District National Park Authority. The current shared service approach has not produced outcomes and it has proved too easy for individual councils to 'opt out' or pursue their own bespoke solutions, leading to failure to maximise the economies of scale.

The experience of the County Council and District Council's commercial partnerships will allow the new authority to build on best practice and create cost effective delivery models.

Key improvements will be delivered in joined-up customer access points or 'front-offices', which will dramatically improve services to the citizen. The new council will also join up back office functions, such as a common approach and support network for human resources, and a single robust ICT infrastructure.

## Making it happen

Creating a single council for Cumbria is practical and achievable. It builds on growing momentum across key agendas like health, economic development and policing, which see Cumbria as the right scale for strategic management.

We have a very clear idea how Cumbria will move from the existing arrangements to a new authority and how this will realise the benefits of change. We recognise that this will not be easy and the public will expect any change to be seamless and will want the planned benefits and improvements to happen quickly. Progress of the County and District councils' improvement agenda will not be undermined by change through robust risk and project management.

The first stage will be extensive consultation with key stakeholders in the period up to July 2007 to ensure this proposal is further enhanced to best reflect Cumbria's needs.

## Legal issues

A unitary Cumbria will for all practical purposes be an entirely new authority with a distinct identity and brand. It will use the continuing Council model because it is more cost effective to achieve and will involve least disruption to the provision of county-wide services during the transitional period. However, this will not be at the expense of investment to ensure that staff and public alike are aware that this is a fresh start and a clean break from the past.

Transitional arrangements relating to the transfer of functions, staff, property, rights and liabilities

are expected to be covered by general regulation provided for in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. Transitional arrangements will require adequate safeguards to secure equity of treatment in relation to staff transfer issues.

In order to ensure a smooth and seamless transition to unitary status, we propose that elections should be held to a shadow authority in May 2008. The role of the shadow authority would be to prepare the unitary authority for the assumption of all local government functions and full local authority powers from April 2009.

During the transitional period from May 2008 to April 2009, existing councils, including the County Council, would continue to maintain quality service provision whilst preparing for the change.

### **HR issues**

Creating a new organisation is an opportunity to create a management and organisational structure aligned to achieving strategic objectives. The new council will be attractive to high quality staff and will make it easier for joint appointments, maximising value from public services in Cumbria.

### **A new culture and brand**

The new council would be re-branded, bringing greater clarity for local people about who delivers local public services and how they access them. The brand will also be an important part of the culture change programme to help integrate staff from disparate organisations into one new council with a shared vision and values. The underlying ethos of the brand will be: "One council, One vision, One voice".

### **Building one council around the customer**

We have plans for creating a new integrated model of customer service – providing a range of connected access points which meet the needs of all parts of the community.

The focal point will be an integrated Customer Relationship Management System - which should provide the platform for joining up district and county services - through face to face, call centre and online access channels, which will provide one-stop shop access for the citizen.

These plans will contribute not just to efficiencies – but to a new relationship between the community and its council.

### **Creating a shared back office**

Remodelling back office functions across the new authority is central to realising efficiency savings. There is clearly an opportunity to remove duplication - especially in areas such as human resources and finance.

Remodelling will also help embed more consistent standards and shared IT solutions across all back office processes.

We do not underestimate the challenges in such transformation and we are fortunate to be able to call on the support and assistance of existing strategic commercial partners in both County and District Councils who have considerable knowledge, experience and capacity to bring to bear on such issues:

### **Integration of IT systems**

Different IT systems exist across the current district and county councils.

Creation of a unitary authority will provide the opportunity to introduce common standards across all operating departments – with scope for significant efficiency and cost reduction. There is the opportunity to radically improve IT infrastructure to generate extra capacity and improved resilience for operating systems.

The integration plan will be based on a strategic review of all council functions and current supporting IT systems.

Obvious early candidates for integration include the creation of a fully integrated modern finance system and an effective HR support system designed to help manage the new combined workforce.

These projects have already been scoped by the County Council and plans for a unitary structure are being considered.

## Rationalisation of property assets

The use of property assets will take account of, existing building stock – but, more importantly, it will reflect the way the unitary authority is organised and how services are to be delivered.

Some rationalisation is already underway in the county through a shared services approach. The end results sought is an authority using only the property it requires to carry out its business efficiently – distributed to meet the needs of citizens and communities. Property decisions will be made in partnership with Health, Police and the Voluntary Sector; and we intend to ensure that co-location and sharing become the norm.

## Sharing the benefits of shared services

The authority will ensure that back office services are distributed fairly in the major towns and cities of Cumbria, ensuring the impact on jobs and local economies is effectively managed.

## Timeline

**18 January** - Cumbria County Council decides whether to put forward a bid.

**25 January** - Submission of bids for new Unitary Councils to central government

**End March 2007** - Announcement on preferred bids.

**March-June 2007** - 12-week consultation period with stakeholders on preferred bids.

**End July 2007** - Final decision on successful bids.

**May 2008** - Elections to a new authority.

**By April 2009** - New Unitary Council up and running.



# Chapter One

## A new vision for Cumbria: The need for transformational change

Local government in Cumbria is underperforming and underachieving. It is over-complex, duplicative, parochial and inefficient. A succession of independent audits – of agendas as diverse as waste management, community safety, economic development and road safety - prove that scarce resources are being wasted by having to address complex challenges through a minefield of fragmented, overlapping and contradictory political and managerial leadership.

Delivering high-quality services, with the capacity to improve, requires a joined-up countywide approach. Fragmenting scarce resources across a complex map of overlapping organisations with limited capacity is failing to resolve the complex issues facing Cumbria's people and communities. Each organisation is inevitably protective of its interests and so is forcing change, modernisation and transformational governance to move at a pace which is far too slow. Council tax payers are suffering the consequences, paying a premium rate for a second-class service. The White Paper provides a unique catalyst for the step-change we've been seeking.

### 1.1 Strength and simplicity

"Cumbria is over governed and under led". This is the stark conclusion from the independent Local Democracy Commission (2006). Cumbria County Council initiated the Democracy Commission to take an independent look at local democratic structures and community engagement across the county.

A complex patchwork of representation means 371 councillors, led by nearly 70 executive or cabinet members, work through seven separate council administrative bureaucracies to serve the needs of the county.

This means the residents of market towns like Alston or Whitehaven, of the city of Carlisle or Borough of Barrow or of village communities like Hawkshead and Milnthorpe have at least two different local members sometimes seemingly, and wastefully, in competition for the position of local leader. The public are faced with two totally independent sets of portfolio holders with often parallel and competing mandates representing their interests.

The role of local government has been transformed over the past 10 years, particularly through community leadership of partnerships, putting more emphasis than ever before on simple, clear lines of democratic accountability. Cumbria needs equally radical change to meet this challenge through:

- Stronger leadership
- Simpler partnerships
- Clear responsibilities
- Responsiveness to local identity
- Greater efficiency and effectiveness

Nationally, however, there is some evidence to show that two-tier local government can work well. There are examples of high-performing, efficient shire counties. For Cumbria though the situation is manifestly different. As a very sparsely populated county with dispersed small settlements (see context in Appendix C), the two-tier approach is unjustifiably top heavy. The inescapable costs of being in business and administration – management structures, accommodation etc – simply soak up too much scarce resource here.

### **Stronger leadership to meet economic challenges**

Cumbria faces massive economic challenges and opportunities. Negotiation of these demands requires stronger and more coherent local leadership. Between 1995 and 2004 our Gross Value Added (GVA) growth was the slowest in the UK. Through county leadership and partnership with the North West Regional Development Agency, an innovative countywide, private sector led partnership, Cumbria Vision, was established in the face of considerable inertia from many existing organisations. This has started to challenge priorities, developing an ambitious plan for Cumbria's future. Consequently the county's performance is being transformed and there are signs of success in turning round GVA growth.

If Cumbria's economy is to change up a gear and benefit from the opportunities offered by the national nuclear industry, the diversification of our rural economy and the challenges of renaissance in Barrow, West Cumbria and Carlisle, then we need to improve our ability to make tough decisions about priorities. We want to get behind a single vision instead of continually settling for parochial interests or the lowest common denominator. We need strong effective leadership, able to make this vision happen and to be heard regionally, nationally and globally in a context where city regions are increasingly coordinated and influential.

This means a new organisation able to work, not just with the NWDA, but a full range of countywide partners, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and critically, the private sector, to promote economic prosperity. For the first time, this must be able to integrate leadership across planning, infrastructure, housing and all other policy areas underpinning the economy.

### **Simpler partnerships**

Over 350 separate partnerships currently exist within the county – a lot of people to do business with. Efforts to rationalise this complex web of relationships require strong leadership and has to overcome local interests and protectionism.

The current situation means that to address major agendas like economic development, waste

management or children's services, automatically requires the attendance of seven 'leaders' or their representatives. Cumbersome partnership boards and structures are creaking under the weight of the need for all to be represented, for everyone to have a say and be given the power of veto. Exciting proposals, for example to transform the economy, are too easily overturned by the need for familiar safe consensus.

Yet at the truly local, community level, individual citizens, voluntary groups and parish and town councils are excluded from the big decisions affecting their lives, or have to negotiate a confusing landscape to have their say.

As the White Paper specifically concludes for Cumbria, all this unnecessary process and structure places very considerable demands and cost on the county compared with areas of equivalent population. Partners in the voluntary and community sector frequently cite the number of partnerships they have to attend as a serious drain on resources.

### **Confused community leadership**

As the importance of community leadership and representation grows, this confused accountability and leadership inescapably results in a blurring of roles, and total confusion for service users, who can be passed from council to council in search of answers for them and their community.

Absurdities abound like the split in responsibility for wet leaves (a road safety issue and thus the responsibility of the County Council) and dry leaves (which are seen as litter, and thus the job of the District Council). Behind individual examples lies the deeper seated problem of a postcode lottery for Cumbria's residents. Some are served by two tiers successfully working together on complex issues. Others suffer, when the district fails to engage, perhaps through lack of resources, capacity or understanding of the issue, or the County cannot deliver. The outcome is that key opportunities for effective service delivery are lost.

### **Responsiveness to local identity**

Whilst district councils cover specific parts of the county, most of their areas are inevitably

administrative conveniences, bringing together disparate places with fierce independence and identity, but without the capacity to give leadership. Studies have shown strong affiliation for Cumbrians with their city, town or village, and with Cumbria as a county, with 79% of residents strongly identifying with Cumbria (as an area, rather than as a council) and 45% very strongly identifying with 'Cumbria' compared with 23% very strongly identifying with their district area (MORI 2004). Although the county council, as well as some districts, have invested in locality arrangements, these often duplicate and cannot comprehensively make improvements to the quality of life for communities.

Links between councils, the public sector and communities are currently formal and mechanistic. They provide very limited opportunity to tap into the reserves of talent, creativity, local knowledge, experience and common sense that ordinary people and communities will offer if they believe their contribution is valued and will be taken into account. The new Council needs to unlock this potential and build strong and secure communities in Cumbria.

### **Efficiency and effectiveness**

Inconsistency, unequal standards and huge variation in the cost of services are leading to wastage and inefficiency. Despite making some inroads on a shared service agenda, organisational protectiveness and existing contractual ties are limiting Cumbria's ability to deliver:

This is shown in fields as diverse as waste collection, procurement, revenues and benefits, culture, democratic services and financial support. In each case the aggregation of services to give economies of scale in the interests of the council tax payer, and give genuine local control and influence over standards is tied to a requirement for autonomous control at each district level. Individual councils may be forced by EU procurement rules to take decisions which are not in the interest of Cumbria as a whole. They can also veto options which could make a real difference. For example negotiation of a countywide PFI approach to streetlighting was recently halted by one council's decision not to engage. Another example of unjustifiable variation is that in Cumbria the cost of council tax collection is twice as high in one district council compared with another:

A unitary Cumbria would expect to achieve significant savings in the costs of council tax collection through aggregation, economies of scale and application of best practice across the county. Clear, effective and forward thinking models for the future are frustrated by the decision making structures operated by each council. Each council creates its own governance and officer arrangements with different cycles of meetings and decision making processes. This means complex joint working arrangements, joint committees, working groups and many meetings. Time is spent negotiating and navigating a course through this tortuous process rather than on the delivery of outcomes.

Enhanced two tier working in Cumbria is not the route to successfully deliver the objectives of the Government's ten year vision for local government, or to meet the economic, environmental and social challenges facing Cumbria. Common sense solutions will continue to be blocked by complex decision making that's all too often constrained by how things are structured and managed, rather than enabling innovation for the future. A unitary council will remove these constraints.

### **Putting people and places at the heart of the council**

Our vision is of a council that listens to individuals and to communities and is built around their interests and the places they live. Cumbria Council will be set up with a duty to work with people and, with their communities. It will take decisions at the most local level possible. It will be designed to have flexibility to allow natural communities to come together and empower them to take decisions, run services and shape their future.

This flexibility will be coupled with the capacity and leverage to influence and design services within a framework of minimum countywide standards, sensitive to the diversity of our people and places. It will also enable common sense solutions like single membership schemes linking access for people to the full range of council facilities, libraries, leisure services, parks, museums and historic buildings.

### Empowering people

People want to have easy points of access to all local government services in communities in Cumbria. The new Council will bring the town hall direct into the neighbourhood and use technology and innovation to empower people directly in their homes. Cumbria Council will engage with people according to how they live their busy lives rather than expecting them to comply with organisational convenience. It will also meet the new Best Value duty to devolve delivery of management and services to communities wherever practical and possible.

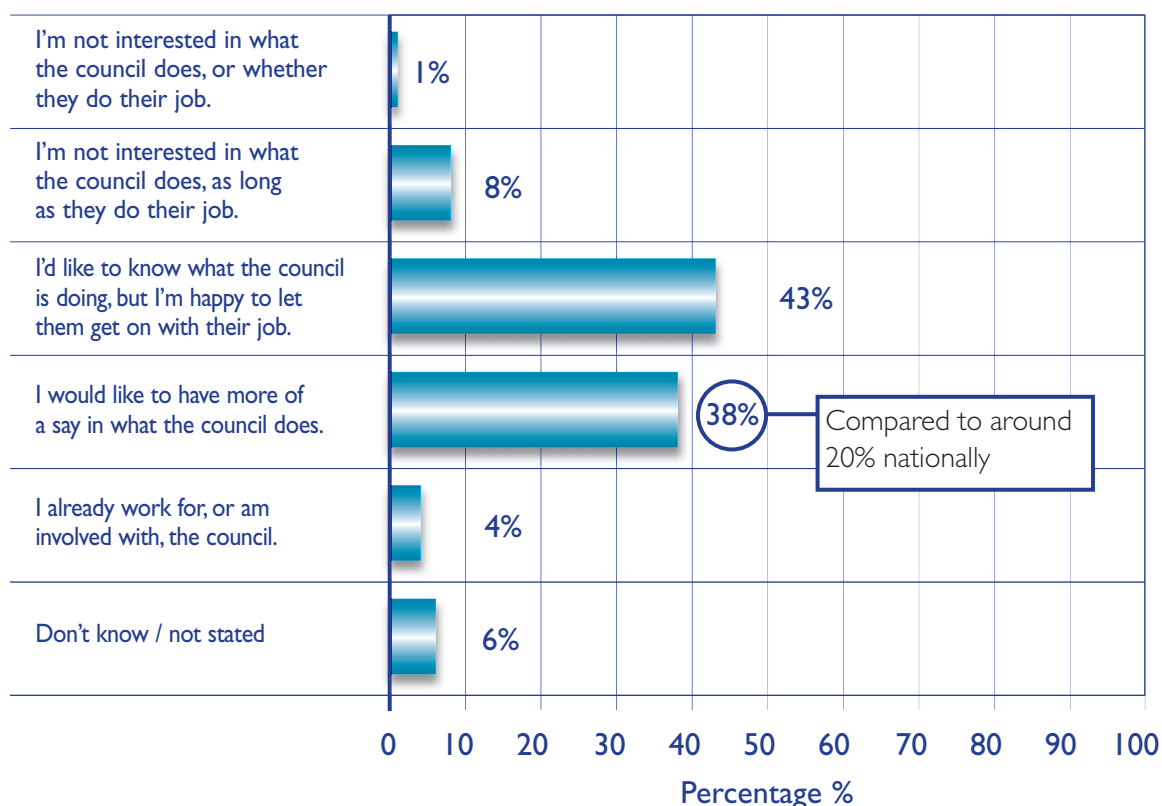
The new Unitary will respond to what people are saying about life in Cumbria. We know from quality of life surveys, most recently by Ipsos MORI in 2006, that Cumbria enjoys very high satisfaction levels as a place to live, but that people want a voice and to influence the complex problems and issues affecting their neighbourhood or family.

They want involvement on issues like; affordable, decent housing, the streetscene, securing a more prosperous future for their children, easing access to services, jobs and facilities and supporting a health service able to meet future needs. They want to do this on their terms, using new technologies, and through community and voluntary groups. They do not want to, or expect to, have to develop a detailed understanding of the mechanics of local government.

### Simple, clear governance that works

All these challenges cut across existing council and organisational responsibilities. They need clear, unambiguous leadership which can work across boundaries. No one council or partner agency has a monopoly on the solutions, but our vision is of a new Cumbria Council with this strong leadership, that communicates effectively, is accountable to people and is able to foster the right conditions for negotiation, influence, and consensus building – within and beyond the county.

**Question: Which of these statements below comes closest to your own attitudes towards your district and county council?**



Source: Cumbria Quality of Life Survey IPSOS MORI 2006

## 1.2 Shared priorities

There is a commitment in Cumbria to partnership and joint working, but progress is as slow and cumbersome as governance that cannot provide effective accountability. A Cumbria Council will take this to the next level through strong strategic leadership that is responsive to local people and has capacity to tackle complex cross-cutting issues like climate change, social exclusion and worklessness.

The basis for shared priorities is now in place through a sound understanding of the pressures and opportunities facing the county defined for the first time in the Cumbria Agreement, our Local Area Agreement (LAA), covering a range of shared priorities across the following areas.

### **Economic development, culture, housing and planning**

Cumbria needs local government with the clarity and determination of leadership to play its part in securing prosperity for the future. It also needs the capacity to ensure that regeneration is fully integrated with other key agendas, because in Cumbria, many related issues like infrastructure, healthcare, education, training and skills can unlock the door to modernisation and improvement.

All the major challenges faced by the county have an economic footprint that transcends district boundaries. A Cumbria Council will ensure regeneration priorities can engage with forward thinking leadership to:

- Make sure that the plans for renaissance of Carlisle as a sub-regional capital, and Barrow as a centre for economic growth are delivered with support from the private sector; building the links between these major urban centres and their wider hinterlands, beyond current council boundaries
- Create an environment that is attractive to investment and diversification into potential growth sectors like knowledge-based industries, digital and creative, food and drink, and specialist engineering

- Ensure West Cumbria and Furness benefit from nuclear decommissioning and the opportunities from the civil and military nuclear agenda. This will need the retention of a world class workforce delivering the right skills mix to attract and retain investment, and moving to a culture which is confident and assured, demonstrating that Barrow and West Cumbria are excellent places in which to invest and do business
- Create an effective university able to retain young people in Cumbria, raise skill levels, aspirations and achievement for our workforce and respond to business needs, supporting the design of a university and distributed learning network which can compete on a national stage, changing the way people think about Cumbria as a dynamic, creative and fast paced location for investment
- Support and embracing the new positive vision and direction for the Lake District National Park and proposals for world heritage designation, reinvigorating tourism, being positive and enabling about sustainable economic development and safeguarding its special qualities whilst protecting and preserving the landscape and cultural heritage.

Cumbria Council will ensure the county plays its part as a powerful sub-region in the North West, presenting a focused, agreed set of priorities such as the Cumbria Economic Regeneration Action Plan, able to influence investment at a regional and national level on challenges like transport and a balanced housing market.

Without this coherence Cumbria's voice is too easily drowned out by city regions with clearer, more unified political leadership.

Cumbria Council will also need to integrate land use planning and regeneration and investment in infrastructure in line with the recommendations from the recent national Barker review. This will result in a more consistent planning context for businesses and investors. The future for West Cumbria, Carlisle and Barrow is intrinsically linked and dependent on the delivery of high quality infrastructure which needs Cumbria to

influence decisions happening at regional level. Similarly Cumbria faces the land-use challenges of safeguarding and supporting the work of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks whilst, at the same time, maximising their contribution to economic prosperity and as places where communities can thrive. Cumbria Council will achieve this in a way the current structure cannot achieve, working as a strong, coherent partner with the National Park Authorities.

In a county with a world class landscape, environment and culture, Cumbria Council will bring together the fragmented responsibilities for marketing, streetscene, and funding to create a simple transparent relationship with Cumbria Tourism, the sub-regional destination marketing organisation.

At present, leadership on the important environmental quality of life agenda is split and reliant on collaboration between tiers. These operate to varying management arrangements, policies and plans delivering different service levels from council to council.

Management of the natural environment and countryside access is also divided between the tiers at present. Ownership and management of open spaces falls to both tiers. The county's leadership on biodiversity and nature conservation stands apart from strengths in district councils on management of considerable land holdings. This needs to be brought together if Cumbria's unique landscape and natural assets are to be best managed for future generations.

### **Children, young people and families**

In relation to children, young people and families, much is already being done through the leadership of the County Council, as Children's Services authority, to bring together all agencies involved in safeguarding and improving the lives of children and young people. However a myriad of agencies, structures and systems are acting to slow the pace of change and improvement. Good performance in places still masks inequality of provision. The new Council needs to shift resources to support prevention and early intervention, tackling schools which are failing to deliver improvements sufficiently quickly.

Engagement on this agenda with the district councils varies hugely, and we want to move forward rapidly to build on the findings and strengths in the recent Joint Area Review. This partial engagement is failing to serve the interests of all our children, when services affecting health and well being – like the arts, leisure, sport facilities, and youth work support, are separately controlled and compartmentalised. Stronger challenge is needed to ensure the delivery of the Children and Young People's partnership plan.

Cumbria Council will strengthen the role schools can play in their communities as a hub for the full range of services, supporting leisure, children, and life-long learning, securing better engagement of young people and families in decision making, and strengthening our safeguarding arrangements and support to vulnerable groups. At present it's a sad reality that decisions on housing for vulnerable families can be taken in isolation from an understanding of that vulnerability and the impact this can have on their well being.

Cumbria Council will coordinate support for the most vulnerable homeless families through integration of the housing, health and social care needs of homeless young people, and coordinating access to leisure and sporting facilities.

### **Health and well being**

Cumbria's new single PCT and a joint appointment of a Director of Public Health will drive the formation of a health improvement plan. Future partnership progress will be designed to influence agencies across the public and voluntary sectors, to tackle complex challenges like alcohol-related illnesses, smoking and cancer mortality, low life expectancy in many parts of the county and particular health issues in more deprived parts of Barrow, West Cumbria and Carlisle, as well as the pockets of rural deprivation across the county.

Political leadership and responsibility for all these issues is fragmented at the present time with responsibility for housing, licensing, leisure and recreation, planning decisions and other key issues, isolated from leadership of the agenda for adult social care, planning for children and addressing worklessness through ill health.

A new Cumbria Council will give leadership across this agenda, and will have the scale and capacity to work closely with the PCT, Voluntary and Community Sector, Housing Associations and other partners to pool information, skills and resources to best effect. There is a strong role to be played in jointly planning health and care services, co-locating and sharing assets and resources, and releasing efficiency.

### **Older people**

Cumbria has the opportunity to lead the way nationally in responding to the impact of demographic change, and demonstrating good practice in planning and delivering services to meet the needs of the increasing population of older people. We need to find ways of working to support more people living in their own homes, giving them more, and better informed choice and higher standards of care, delivered consistently across the county.

We also want to use new structures and ways of engaging and consulting better with older people, particularly beyond those people for whom we already provide services. For example, we have the opportunity to recognise, reward and learn from the increasing number of older people in our communities working in the Voluntary and Community sector through extra care housing schemes, or contributing in other ways to quality of life in Cumbria.

Cumbria Council will deliver a strong strategic approach to joint planning to meet these growing needs, jointly commissioning services and performance, managing their delivery, supporting the Voluntary and Community sector to offer local services of a preventative nature, for example combating loneliness amongst older people in rural communities and responding to the diverse needs of seldom heard groups such as migrant workers.

### **Safer communities**

We are fortunate to suffer relatively low levels of crime in Cumbria, but want to work with Cumbria Constabulary on the issue of perception of crime and to support local policing initiatives. In securing community safety and safer communities, Cumbria Council will want to work better at tackling issues like the impact of drugs and alcohol that cut across

organisational interests and boundaries. The new Council will harness the skills of licensing, community support officers, and community initiatives like Neighbourhood Watch to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

The current approach is made more difficult by a pattern of five Local Strategic Partnerships, four Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and seven local authorities. This causes capacity issues amongst our partners and the voluntary sector and slows progress on crime reduction where timely decisions are important.

Cumbria Constabulary is nationally recognised for its excellence in working at a community level through 21 local policing teams, signposting the way for a county-scale organisation to work locally, recognising diversity and delivering a clear and effective visible presence in our varied city, towns and villages. Cumbria Council will be able to work alongside and mirror this style, where possible sharing its resources and intelligence about communities and their community safety needs, particularly at the frontline. This will require some re-alignment by the new Council, but there will be significant benefits.

### **Stronger communities and community cohesion**

Local engagement, volunteering and community action is a vital part of the strength and capacity of Cumbria. Cumbria Council will support capacity building and the development of stronger communities by unlocking the potential of our voluntary sector and by engaging directly with parish and town councils, community and market town partnerships. This recognises that democracy is most vibrant when it starts and is supported at the most local level.

The new Council will work to bring Cumbria's diverse communities together and to make the county a place which welcomes and celebrates diversity, drawing strength and business advantage from it. At the moment, progress on implementing equality and diversity good practice is variable and largely reliant on influence, expertise and resources at county level. Cumbria Council will take a leadership role and pool resources on key issues

like translation services and support for integration into communities. It will respond to increasing levels of eastern European workers in the tourism and food processing sectors, and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs, supporting more cohesive communities across the county.

Cumbria Council will remove the disjointed approach to:

- Managing improvement against the equality standard
- Ensuring staff and members have equality and diversity training
- Carrying out equality impact assessments
- Sharing data and developing evidence-based practice
- Developing policies, strategies and schemes to meet equality legislation.

It will enable a more joined up approach to tackling prejudice and hate incidents. Cumbria Council will benefit black and minority ethnic groups by providing more focussed resources for improved race relations, currently not a sufficient priority for smaller councils with individually low levels of BME people.

### **Liveability**

Importantly for our communities, the new council will address the liveability challenges our communities face. We've begun to turn around our recycling and waste minimisation performance and this is an example of good joint working with the district councils. But Cumbria needs to move more quickly to tackle the agenda in the longer term. The current mix of contracts for street cleansing, waste collection, grounds maintenance and street sweeping mean different schedules and inconsistent results.

Widely varying contractual arrangements lead to different standards from place to place. For example, each district has a separate grass cutting contract with separate rural highway safety and environmental cutting systems.

Despite previous attempts at coordination, each district operates functions like off-street parking through separate systems and procedures and there are different arrangements for residents parking and appeals procedures. These generate confusion and inefficiency for people.

The two-tier system also has led to absurdities like road sweeping in rural areas – where it has not been possible to coordinate autumn leaf fall collection with district led road sweeping, or link county weed spraying of the roadside with the district's sweeping activity.

Highways maintenance is another area where responsibility is split, with some Districts covering urban unclassified roads and County picking up principal and classified roads – often in the same town and village.

This causes lack of clarity, confusion on reporting defects, as well as inconsistent service delivery. It has also created serious problems for joined up approaches to issues like streetlighting where the split responsibility has undermined a countywide PFI solution.

### **Central services**

The new Council will minimise the costs of central services and overheads. The current arrangement is currently not achieving economies of scale, particularly apparent for example in costly, multiple management teams – with seven chief executives, seven senior management teams, seven finance directors, etc.

The mix of systems and contracts makes it difficult to invest in up to date technology. Incompatibility across the seven authorities, and the desire to protect individual investments, is preventing progress on shared services. Consequentially, extra resources and overheads are required to patch over these inconsistencies – for instance the Connected Cumbria 'Hub', an excellent partnership is having to incur additional costs to create a seamless service.

Fragmentation of central support also weakens the ability to recruit, retain and develop high quality managers and transfer learning and good practice. In small organisations it is difficult to secure sufficient capacity to employ or commission effective support functions and there can be a lack of resilience. The new Council will build on what's been achieved through our Connected Cumbria shared service agenda and build a reputation as an excellent employer of choice.

## 1.3 Meeting the challenge:

We believe this is the time to put Cumbria on a secure and sustainable footing for the future. The White Paper makes clear that the status quo is not an option. For those areas not choosing to adopt a unitary model, radical transformation of two tier working is required, either through pathfinder status or other means.

It has been suggested that smaller unitaries – cutting Cumbria up into smaller pieces – are an option, with an implication that smaller councils are inherently better able to respond to local needs. The financial argument against this approach is unequivocal. Moreover, evidence from Welsh, Scottish and English reorganisations in the 1990s demonstrate there is no inevitable link between size and local responsiveness. Instead, the key has been shown to be capacity – financial, human resource and the relationship to other key partners.

The cost of setting up the support structures for two or more councils, with duplication of members, officers and services covering Cumbria would have a payback period which totally fails to meet the tests set out in the White Paper.

On top of these management costs, an area with a shared set of economic, social and environmental challenges like Cumbria, will inevitably need the construction of unwieldy joint working arrangements and structures across smaller unitaries which would also weaken leadership, focus and clarity.

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 will create further challenges through the need for greater efficiency and as council tax levels must be kept to acceptable levels, the thrust must be towards even greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Creating more, smaller authorities would just constrain capacity to invest efficiencies in the front line, instead of absorbing them in running costs.

### No credible alternative

The White Paper also puts forward the idea of Pathfinder status for improved two tier working, suggesting the possibility, through legislative change, of a shared pool of members and single officer cadre working across county and district authorities.

As an option, this initially appears to have many similarities with the unitary proposal in this paper, although representing an inherently slower approach. Our view is that the limited track record on transformational shared service working in Cumbria speaks for itself. There has been some success, for example, the Port of Workington, the Connected Cumbria Partnership and in Waste Management. But generally we have seen a series of debates about leadership and control, setting district against county and vice versa. Indeed our experience of the response of districts to the invitation set out in the White Paper underlines the view that there is no real appetite for joint working which challenges existing organisations and responsibilities. The missing ingredient is strong leadership coupled with the authority to deliver the priorities for Cumbria. Unitary leadership will drive change.

Continuing current arrangements and the existing tiers would all too easily enable business as usual, with more negotiating around the edges of the issue. In this context, it is also important to remember that at national level both county and districts gave assurances to the public, town and parish councils as part of previous rounds of restructuring when favouring continued two tier working. As shown by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in their submission to the White Paper, there has been little delivery on these promises. There is therefore little prospect of achieving the radical changes required in Cumbria without commensurately radical transformation in leadership and coherence.

This is therefore the time for a fresh start, and the opportunity to build a new culture of performance and delivery in Cumbria. The next section sets out how a new Council for Cumbria would operate.



# Chapter Two

## Why unitary Cumbria is the answer, and how it will work

People, neighbourhoods and communities will be at the centre of the new council. It will reinvigorate local democracy capitalise on people's enthusiasm and passion for their communities, helping them to make better decisions about their future.

### 2.1 The community empowerment and engagement role

Engagement and consultation with citizens and communities is the starting point from which decisions will be taken about services. This will particularly influence how key facilities in communities – schools, libraries, local transport, and the quality of their environment come together to deliver high quality services.

Cumbria Council will provide clarity and simplicity of responsibility and accountability. Local people will be able to call their councillors to account and, through them, the broader public sector in Cumbria.

All key local facilities; libraries, leisure centres, information points and offices will be joined up and co-located in communities. Councillors will be able to take sensible decisions about prioritising scarce resources.

#### **Community intelligence**

Cumbria Council will build shared information sources, databases and performance information collected about communities which cut across organisational boundaries. The issues, needs and priorities in one place or organisation become intelligence and data which is available to the whole Cumbria partnership. We will pool our community intelligence to inform decision making.

This will benefit communities by ensuring they are not asked the same questions time after time.

It will transform credibility because communities and citizens will see feedback from public sector Cumbria as a whole. This shared intelligence will form the basis of a shared understanding of the needs of the county.

#### **More local than ever before**

Cumbria Council will put in place and enable structures for very local decision making, scrutiny of the wider public sector, and locally delegated budgets within a policy framework. Localities will work with those organisations and local councils already in place – parish and town councils, local partnerships and voluntary sector groups, listening to local views.

These arrangements will be more local than any present decision-making structures at either county or district level. In the spirit of the White Paper, the council doesn't want to be prescriptive about these 'Community Boards' – recognising that excellence already exists in parts of the county – for example through quality town and parish councils and market town initiatives. We want to consult more widely and test ideas through pilot arrangements based on a common set of principles – an enabling framework, working with the existing centres of excellence, and we do not want to impose a centralised model.

Recognising local government has made commitments to local communities in the past which have not always been honoured. Cumbria Council will establish an independent Community Governance Review Board modelled on the Local Democracy Commission. This will advise and monitor the new council against key goals. Membership of the Board will be the subject of early consultation.

## 2.2 How will this be achieved?

### Frontline councillors

The first point for Cumbria Council's engagement with communities will be the role of the frontline councillor. They will become, first and foremost, the champions and advocates of the communities they represent. This proposal empowers them to work across the public sector and beyond.

Our proposal for member representation is for 84 new councillors for Cumbria to be elected on the current county council divisions. However our view is that the new Cumbria Council should ideally move towards a position of around 100 members. This results in one member per 3,800 electors, comparable with East Riding of Yorkshire – a high performing rural unitary with an appropriate and manageable number of councillors. We will make this suggestion to the Boundary Committee which will be asked to initiate an early review within the first four year term.

Members will be elected on the basis of single member wards giving clear accountability and transparency for electors, and also giving clarity for the performance of the frontline role. There will be a wide pool of talent and expertise for the new council to draw on. It will seek innovative approaches to attracting a broader range of candidates representing the diversity of our population. The new council will encourage more people to come forward for consideration through high quality information to candidates, clearer and more attractive roles, family friendly meeting times and locations.

All members will be developed and supported to be the democratically accountable champions for their community with a duty to seek out the voices of those seldom heard. They will be able to take advantage of the powers proposed in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006 for delegated decision making to frontline councillors. We will provide each frontline member with a budget of £5-6,000 which will, for instance, enable effective response to Community Calls for Action as described in the White Paper.

Frontline Councillors' key roles will include:

- Acting on behalf of their community by rooting their responsibilities firmly in that place
- Actively encouraging community participation and citizen involvement in decision making, including responding to community calls for action
- Challenging and scrutinising on behalf of their constituents, council and other local public services
- Bringing community members and stakeholders together; brokering solutions and being the advocate for the community
- Acting as the bridge between the communities they represent and the political institutions that provide and commission services. That means scrutinising on behalf of communities, but also explaining decisions taken by the executive that may create losers as well as winners
- Dealing with constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and without prejudice
- Developing a working knowledge of the organisations, services, activities and other factors important to the community's well being.

A suggested role description for frontline councillors is set out in Appendix A. They will have a range of tools and support for this role including:

- Dedicated community support officers, in some cases joint appointments with parish and town council clusters, helping build their capacity to be advocates for their communities. We will build on our expertise with Neighbourhood Development Officers – helping knit together services locally to make sure the council and its partners make sense in that place
- Community support officers will support frontline councillors to get best value from resources, understand local priorities and work with the local community to improve quality of life

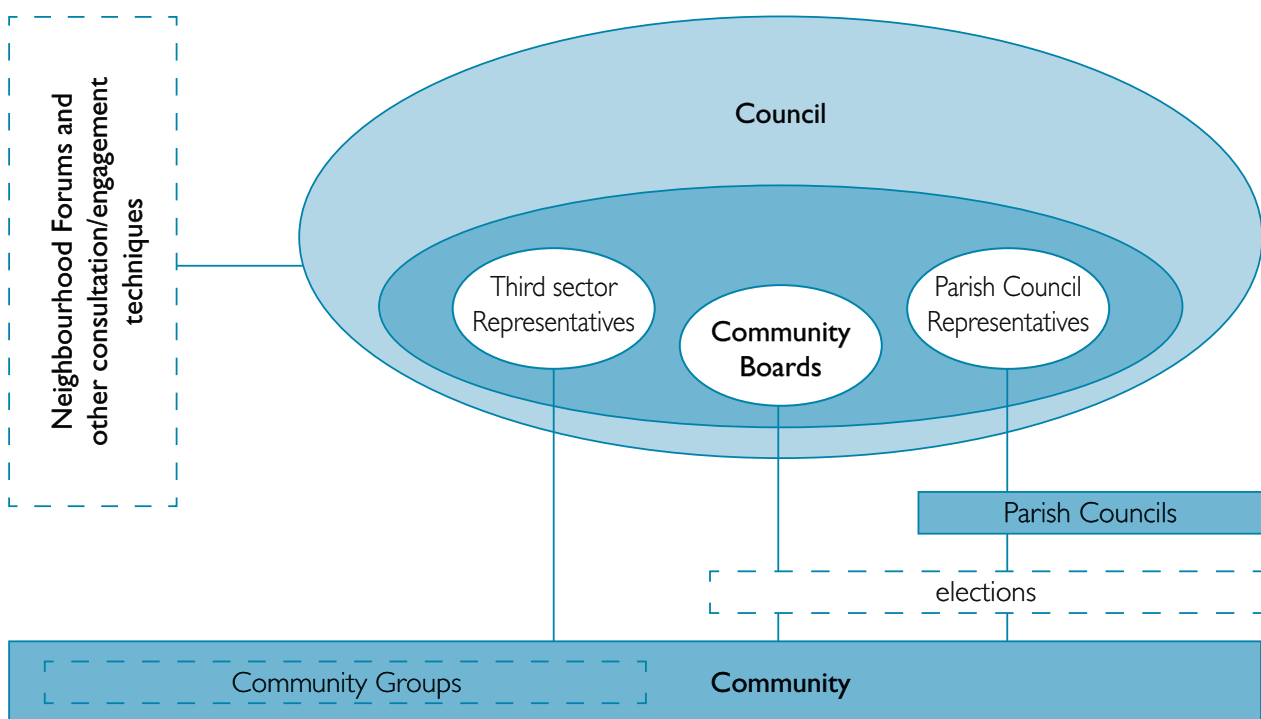
- Support officers will also ensure the Community Call for Action works well in Cumbria, ensuring issues are raised and channelled through the council and to key partners, and chasing and championing the communities interests in securing adequate responses
- Councillors will also secure effective networks between all frontline council staff in that locality, helping promote the exchange of good practice, build corporate awareness of key emerging issues and continuously explore opportunities for greater efficiency and effective service delivery
- A range of options for division based forums, surgeries and meetings will be on offer, building on the existing and mature pattern of Neighbourhood Forums, proactively reaching out to communities allowing discussion, identification and agreement on local issues.

**Community Boards**

At the heart of the new council’s engagement with its diverse communities will be its Community Boards – the eyes and ears of the council. Usually chaired by a Cumbria Councillor; representation on the boards will include other unitary councillors, parish council and third sector representatives, reflecting the mix of local organisations and people – for example from school governing bodies, neighbourhood watch and residents associations. Detailed proposals for boards and their constitutional responsibilities will be developed in partnership with the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC).

These Community Boards will be developed through consultation with local communities, parish and town councils and Cumbria Councillors, as well as other partners with local footprints like the police. They will reflect the communities local people most powerfully identify with, and which are a sensible basis for helping shape local services. Critically, the new council will have a duty to ensure and sustain effective coverage across Cumbria and will consult with communities to achieve this aim. A possible starting point for defining community board areas is attached to Appendix B.

**Community boards - engagement and representation**



Key objectives for Community Boards will be to engage local people and communities in overseeing the full range of strategic matters and local issues by:

- Forge close links between the council and the Constabulary's Local Policing Team at neighbourhood level, helping join up consultation, improve sharing of intelligence at community level, provide a forum for local challenge on local priorities and performance.
- Developing and implementing community action plans in the context of the LAA and council plan, defining local priorities and identifying specific areas for stretched performance or adaptations needed to fit local circumstance
- Helping shape services like youth and play facilities, top up social care, local transport provision, community safety and grants
- Support greater direct democratic engagement with young people. By working directly with youth projects and schools, ensuring each Community Board has youth representatives
- Overseeing local service coordination bringing together and where possible co-locating public and third sector services
- Providing the local focus for equity of access and common high standards
- Using a range of tools for 21st Century engagement empowering people and communities to engage with and be consulted by their frontline councillors including neighbourhood forums, web-based discussion rooms and participative democracy techniques engaging harder to reach groups not attracted to conventional meetings and structures
- Once they meet the required quality standards, budgets will be devolved to allow direct action to address local needs. This will enable enhancements to standard quality services where local people wish, possibly through matching funding from parish or town council precept levels and powers to run local facilities where there is a demand, recognising local people and organisations are often best placed to meet their own needs
- Undertaking high quality consultation and engagement for the whole of the public sector covering issue like the council budget, educational organisation, planning policy, policing and health. For citizens the immediate benefit will be a direct and simple way of influencing the whole public sector; removing repetitious surveys by one organisation after another
- Overseeing delivery of local public services, particularly those relating to streetscene and community safety (clean, green and safe services)
- Organising regular (three or four times a year) 'local summits', bringing frontline councillors together with their communities, providing a chance for local challenge through a report on the council's work in that area. This will help facilitate the community call for action and reinforce the link between councillors, communities and services
- Enabling speedy and responsive approach to handling petitions including Community Calls to Action and other representations from local people about council services and those provided across the public sector
- Advising the council on new bylaws to address issues and concerns raised by the local community
- Support for parish and town councils wanting to achieve Quality Parish status.

A key principle is that there will be no one size fits all approach. Boards will need to demonstrate they meet key governance and conduct standards in order to discharge their role, but the model is designed to be enabling rather than constraining.

There will be approximately 20-30 boards, taking account of the natural communities already identified for land-use planning policy. Determination of the final pattern will have regard to:

- The advice from the proposed independent Community Governance Review Board charged with holding Cumbria Council to account with respect to its devolution commitments and practice

- The duty placed on the Council's Area Committees (see below) to foster effective Community Board structures within their patch, and the requirement to be enshrined in the constitution for Area Committees to maximise their delegation to Community Boards subject to minimum requirements being satisfied. Community Boards will have a right of appeal direct to the Executive if they wish more delegation to take place
- The willingness and capacity of local councils and other bodies to engage individually and jointly. The new council will be keen to work with parish and town councils and CALC to build their capacity and skills wherever possible and where this is sought locally
- Outcomes of consultation on the desired shape and extent of local working arrangements and the views of the Boundary Committee on sensible, natural communities which relate well to electoral arrangements
- The need to avoid a top-down one-size fits all approach
- The need to take account of efficiency, economy and effectiveness in devising proposals
- To enable experimentation and learning across the county.

### **Civic pride**

We recognise that civic pride is of critical importance throughout Cumbria and that for many, the office of Mayor is an important and much loved symbol. Where mayors already exist the council will not wish to disturb arrangements which local people clearly value and will consult the public on this. In places like Barrow and Carlisle, and all other locations where a mayor is valued, options to maintain the office will be considered. This will be an important issue to safeguard and foster in the new council's approach.

Carlisle was created a city in 1158 and appropriate arrangements for the maintenance of this status and the rights and privileges associated with it will be put in place. This is likely to be through the establishment

of Charter Trustees. Similar arrangements can be adopted in relation to the Borough of Barrow-in-Furness and in other major towns irrespective of whether these become parished.

Coupled with this, we recognise that key settlements in Cumbria; Carlisle, Barrow, Whitehaven and Penrith are not parished. Cumbria Council will, if there is local interest, consult on how best to respond to people's desire for town and parish councils for these areas. Models elsewhere in England show how civic identity and city status can be protected and enhanced in a countywide unitary approach.

Each of these major urban centres contain multiple neighbourhoods with natural communities. Early work in South Workington, South Whitehaven and Central Barrow through the neighbourhood strand of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund shows how effective board structures could operate in this context.

It's clear that no one-size fits all approach will work and that the Cumbria Council approach will need to be enabling and to learn from what works best.

Our intention is that the new Council will capitalise and build on the existing high levels of civic pride in Cumbria - enabling communities to maintain and enhance their own cultural identity through activities as diverse as local markets and festivals to annual firework displays and Christmas lights. Local celebrations of identity are crucial to sustainable communities and will not be lost through the move to a unitary council.

Determination of the pattern of the most local level of government in the urban areas of Carlisle and Barrow will be subject to extensive local consultation. Options will include the parishing of these areas and the development of suburban Community Boards. Experience from elsewhere in England demonstrates that creation of a unitary county is entirely compatible with establishment of effective Town and City Councils, maintaining precepting powers and ability to manage local civic activities.

## The role of town and parish councillors

The new Council will work closely and collaboratively with town and parish councils as a vital tier of local government. It will agree a Charter for their development with the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) including the Quality Town and Parish Council Scheme. The new Cumbria Council will encourage local councils to deliver and influence services as appropriate and to make a difference in their local area through high standards, better delivery and the elimination of duplication through more joined up services.

In Cumbria, town and parish councils are often small and in many cases have low capacity with some clerks often providing the main source of support to more than one council. The unitary proposal includes financial provision and development support to town and parish councils as well as capacity for improvements to their governance and ethical framework.

Where appropriate, town and parish councils will be encouraged to join together to develop groupings to gain the capacity to undertake a broader range of services having regard to the agreed pattern of Community Boards. In late 2005 CALC undertook a survey of town and parish councils which demonstrated that although the range of powers available to town and parish councils is wide, in practice they have concentrated on the following:

- commenting on planning applications
- common land / village greens
- bus shelters
- community centres / village halls
- allotments
- car parking
- burial grounds
- entertainments and the arts
- grass cutting.

A recent CALC survey established that over 66% of town and parish councils in Cumbria seek more involvement in the formulation, implementation and review of policies and some additionally wish to deliver those services which directly affect the character, safety and environment of their communities.

Through its Community Boards the unitary authority will therefore open discussions with town and parish councils with a view to enabling them to provide appropriate functions, taking cost and effectiveness into account. This may include:

- Highways, verge and footpath maintenance
- Rights of way maintenance
- Public realm and environmental improvements
- Sports pitches and recreation grounds
- Churchyards, memorials and ancient monuments
- Tourism initiatives including festivals, Christmas lights and public clocks.

Town and parish councils will be fully integrated into the locality arrangements of the unitary authority and will provide a valuable point of contact for the citizen.

## Area Committees

We are proposing four Area Committees to exercise some functions on an area wide basis and to carry out transitional functions for the Executive. Committees are proposed for the following geographical areas:

- Carlisle City Region
- West Cumbria
- East Cumbria (Westmorland and Penrith)
- Barrow in Furness

These have been chosen, taking account of the independent advice to the council from the Local Democracy Commission, reflecting their distinct policy and regeneration agendas. In West Cumbria there is a need for coherent policy to deliver the

West Coast Spatial Masterplan and respond to the Government's nuclear agenda. In East Cumbria there is a common purpose in addressing the issues of rural regeneration through our market towns and rural sparsity.

Carlisle City and Barrow are major settlements and have the potential to drive the economic renaissance of the county from the north and the south respectively.

The Areas will initially be based on existing district boundaries to secure continuity in service delivery and planning but will be reviewed as part of the Boundary Committee's evaluation of electoral arrangements.

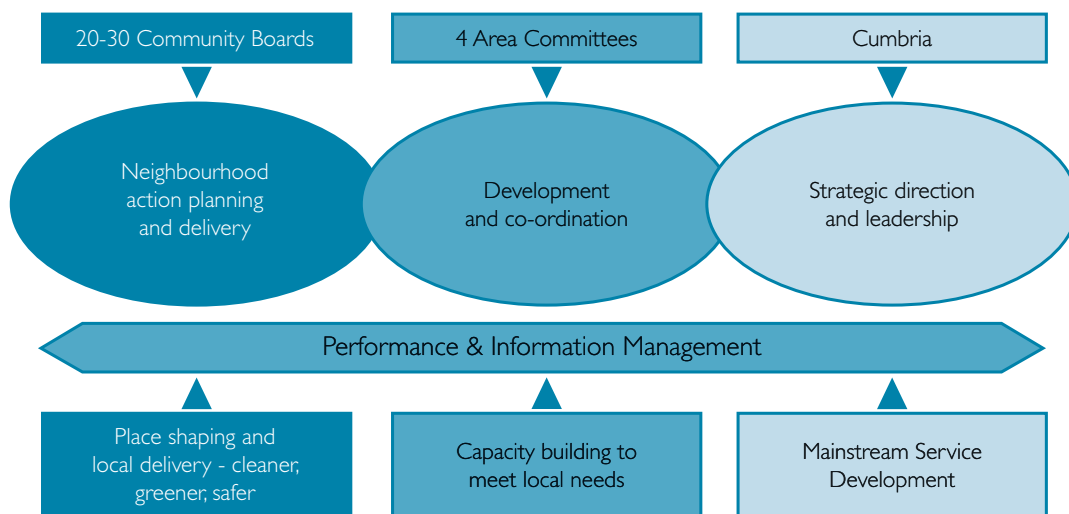
The Area Committees will be important for Cumbria, particularly in the transitional phase, moving into the new Cumbria Council, because there are some functions especially those with a spatial or policy dimension which cut across communities represented by single Community Boards. Area Committees will promote policy coordination and spatial planning in areas facing common challenges.

They will not develop into an intermediate structure and will be light touch in their establishment and operation. The Area Committees will bring together the councillors in the area, one of whom will be elected as chair. The committees will have the following functions:

- A duty to establish and enable development of Community Boards within their areas, following consultation, and supporting them in their formative stages of development
- Providing leadership for place shaping on major regeneration issues; e.g. Carlisle Renaissance, West Cumbria and Barrow Masterplans, work with Lake District National Park on their future vision
- Highways – wider programmes and maintenance
- Integration of waste and civic amenity site issues
- Rationalisation and use of property assets – within the strategic framework set by the Executive
- Housing – especially the delivery of affordable housing
- Arts and Culture overview
- Area performance management.

This role is explained in more detail in sections on key services below. Once Community Boards are established and working effectively, the range of functions dealt with by the Area Committees will be reviewed to check maximum delegation in line with an overall principle of subsidiarity. Again the role of the independent Community Governance Review Board will be critical here.

**Coherent service planning and delivery**



## 2.3 The strategic role - strong, effective and accountable leadership

We believe that the indirectly elected Executive and Leader is the right model for Cumbria. It ensures the Leader has strength and support of the full council, and the opportunity to choose the best members to undertake executive roles. It places leadership in the hands of a Leader supported by a team – in the Cabinet. Executive Members will hold individual decision making powers.

The new Leader will determine cabinet portfolios. There is a real opportunity to shape these to best reflect the mix of functions. A suggested starting point for discussions with the Leader is:

- Leader
- Children, Young People and Leisure
- Adults, Health and Housing
- Safer and Stronger communities
- Planning, Environment and Transport
- Economy
- Contracted services and provider partnerships
- Social Inclusion – including revenues and benefits, the third sector and multiple deprivation
- Finance and resources.

The Executive will take decisions collectively or acting individually. However, for regulatory functions (planning, licensing and appeals) decision making needs to be through politically proportionate committees, outside the Executive, or through delegation to officers.

For the members outside the Cabinet, participation in executive Area Committees and the Community Boards will provide real connectivity with the Executive. They will also have local roles, decision making about budgets and the ability to influence the work of other agencies and

organisations to deliver the Local Area Agreement, as well as Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and regulatory functions.

### Overview and Scrutiny

A strong and effective Overview and Scrutiny function will complement the new council's executive arrangements. It will provide important roles for non executive members in holding the Executive to account. And it will have a positive role in policy review and development which “adds value” to achieving organisational objectives. Under the unitary Council arrangements, the capacity to carry out this work can be augmented by the town and parish councils. The main areas of work for Overview and Scrutiny are:

- thematic policy review and development
- pre-decision advice
- call-in and post decision review
- scrutiny of other public bodies/external organisations and examination of wider community issues
- the “Community Call for Action” set out in the White Paper.

The Community Boards and Area Committees will give a very strong locality and area dimension to the new Council's work. This will be balanced through Overview and Scrutiny by a predominantly cross-service or thematic approach, based on the new unitary's Council Plan. The work will be undertaken through Panels and more informal task and finish groups set up to carry out in-depth reviews of particular policy areas and to make recommendations.

The locality and area arrangements, together with the Overview and Scrutiny role described, will enable all non executive members to examine or explore any aspect of the Council's activity on a cross-cutting or area basis as appropriate. To ensure that the work of Overview and Scrutiny has a high profile, scrutiny members will be able to involve the full Council in the consideration of scrutiny outcomes before matters are considered by the Executive.

The new council will wish to examine closely the particular detail of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and to consult fully on the options but the following will be important elements of a workable and effective model having regard to the Community Board, Area Committee and Executive structures described above.

- the Overview and Scrutiny function will be able through thematic panels, to look into any aspect of the new council's operations or policies
- The thematic or cross-cutting brief of the panels will enable them to consider issues common to more than one Community Board or Area Committee, or to examine any aspect of the work of a particular Area Committee, or to review in depth, for example, the development of the Community Boards
- If need be, scrutiny panels can be set up to examine issues of local concern, involving local interests as necessary, either as co-opted members or witnesses for the review in question
- Under pre-decision advice, a Scrutiny Panel could be asked by the Executive to consider and report on an issue before it is decided. Where decisions are made by the Executive, an Area Committee, a Community Board or other body exercising Executive functions by agreement, call-in mechanisms will provide important checks and balances enabling the appropriate Scrutiny Panel to consider and advise on a decision before it is finally implemented
- As the Area Committees will be exercising some Executive functions, they cannot scrutinise themselves, so scrutiny will have an important role in helping the Committees to operate effectively
- There will be an opportunity to involve town and parish councillors and other co-opted members in examining broad issues or matters of particular local concern through Overview and Scrutiny. While this exists under present arrangements the formation of a new unitary

council will give fresh impetus to securing wider community involvement

- The new Council can ask for policy plans to be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny.

The success of Overview and Scrutiny doesn't just depend on getting the number and organisation of committees right. There will be a need within the new unitary council for cultural acceptance of Scrutiny by elected members and officers. The following will be key to the effective operation of Overview and Scrutiny in the new unitary:

- Overview and scrutiny is given a high status:
- Work programmes are driven by non executive members, not the Executive
- Policy considerations are not always overwhelmed by party loyalties
- The proactive overview element is as valued as the post decision scrutiny of decisions made by the Executive
- There is effective communication between the Executive and Scrutiny.

### Regulatory functions

Cumbria Council will deal with a range of regulatory functions including development control, licensing, rights of way and a range of appeals. There is a balance to be struck in considering at what level these matters should be dealt with. If matters were decided at too high a level there is a danger that the council could be too remote, while if matters were determined very locally real conflicts of interest could arise.

Our view is that most regulatory functions will be dealt with by four specialist politically proportionate committees probably based on the areas covered by the four Area Committees with a Council wide body being set up to deal with strategic and countywide matters. Thus, for example, development control matters concerning the nuclear industry would be handled by the proposed West Cumbria Area Development Control Sub-Committee.

### Other standing committees

The statutory requirements to establish certain bodies – a Standards Committee for example, and a Pensions Committee – already exist on unitary principles. We believe the new unitary should seek to keep the number of other standing committees to a minimum so that there is sufficient capacity within the new Council to focus on the key member roles at the Community Board and Area Committee levels as well as the important Overview and Scrutiny role.

### National Park Authorities

The National Park Authorities are separate and distinct authorities with clear statutory functions. Cumbria Council will continue to support the important role of National Parks in the life of the county. In appointing members to National Park Authorities, the Council will have regard to the desirability of drawing them from areas in or near to the Parks. Cumbria Council membership of the Lake District National Park Authority will be primarily drawn from the Area Committees which serve the Lake District.

## 2.4 The partnership role - integration across the public sector

A new Cumbria Council will have the capacity to meet the place shaping role for Local Government set out in the White Paper. It will have the capacity to work through a refreshed Cumbria Strategic Partnership (CSP) to develop a new Sustainable Community Strategy and to negotiate and lead delivery of the Local Area Agreement for Cumbria. This will be at the heart of a performance framework for Cumbria with clear, shared priorities and targets negotiated between Cumbria partners and government. The Cumbria Community Strategy and Agreement will then be the basis for future audit activity through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment as set out in the White Paper. The new CSP will have an executive Public Service Board consisting of all the key partners who bring resource and capacity to the table. They will be supported and support a wider partnership - the CSP itself

- which will bring together the key interests of the county on a regular basis. The current pattern of five LSPs will be disbanded and Community Boards (truly local partnerships) will feed direct to the CSP.

### Bringing the Local Area Agreement to life

Community Boards will bring local councillors together with other key local partners in each of the key towns and communities to challenge effective delivery of the LAA in their area and provide feedback to the council and Cumbria Strategic Partnership on where more effort is needed.

These will be partnerships which local people will want to come to and engage with because they will be able to affect how services are delivered in their communities. Building on the success of local regeneration partnerships, they will work on community action plans which Cumbria Council will have a duty to have regard to in setting all its policies. These plans will bring the LAA to life locally and mean that in future updates of the agreement, the targets which are set for the County reflect priorities across Cumbria's city, towns and villages. Through negotiation in Community Boards, stretching local outcome targets can also be set, engaging communities more directly in the agreement.

### Joined up services

Integration and efficient use of property is a key issue for the new council. It will, for the first time, be able to secure integration across the full range of local council services to make them make sense in communities. Rather than every agency, and sometimes every service within a council, investing in its own accommodation, the new council will take an overview and seek co-location with other partners.

### Working alongside strategic partners

Recent decisions have strengthened co-terminosity of organisations, all based on the Cumbria footprint. This has streamlined and strengthened our capacity for joint working.

The creation of the Cumbria-wide Primary Care Trust and the Cumbria Partnership NHS Trust has been a step change, enabling joint appointments, commissioning, planning and delivery

with improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. Similarly in partnership with NWDA, Cumbria Vision, the sub-regional economic partnership, recognises that securing the county's future prosperity needs to happen through leadership at county level, drawing on a shared understanding of local priorities along with solutions which cut across district boundaries. The NWDA and North West Regional Assembly have both determined that the sub-region of Cumbria is the right scale for engagement in regional policy making.

With Cumbria Constabulary boundaries now similarly aligned, the Cumbria Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership is already leading a Countywide Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership as part of the LAA. Cumbria Police's leadership on neighbourhood policing would integrate well with the model for Community Boards and the role of frontline councillors. We will encourage close working between police basic command units, health management units, and the Community Boards to ensure sustained integration on community safety activity, for instance with the Fire and Rescue service.

Cumbria Council's leadership will be able to develop strong, productive relationships with key local business and commercial figures, both at Cabinet and Area Committee level. This will help ensure the new Council understands and can best facilitate business needs.

The financial case accompanying this bid focuses on efficiencies gained through integration of District and County services. Even greater potential efficiencies can be unlocked by collaboration across the Cumbria public sector on issues like property, ICT and back office support. A single Cumbria Council will have the capacity and focus to work much more easily with partners like the PCT, Police and with neighbouring councils to deliver these further efficiencies.

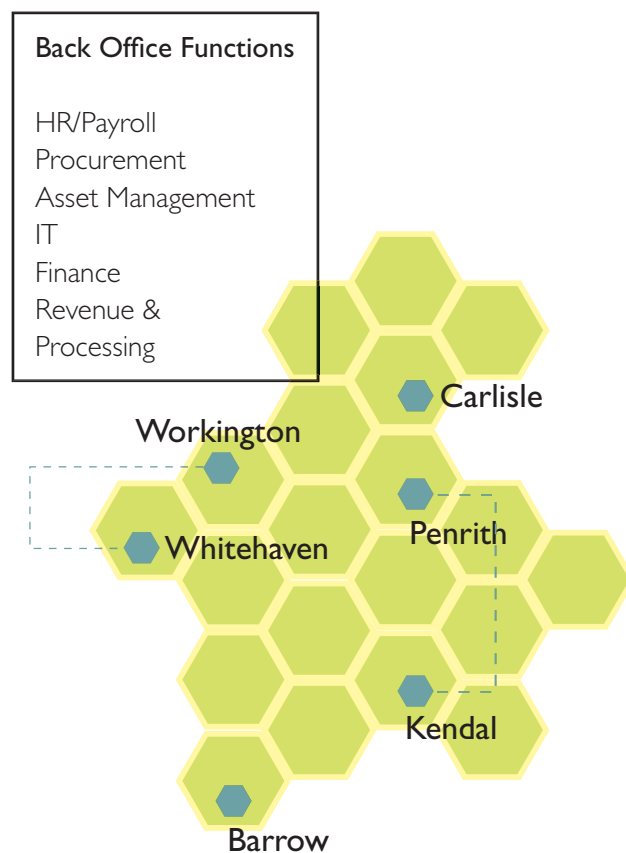
**Truly local**

The old model of government from the grand town hall will always, inevitably, be equally distant and inaccessible for sparse communities like Millom or Alston irrespective of whether the hall is sited in Whitehaven, Penrith or Carlisle.

The new Cumbria Council will have the capacity to invest in truly local and integrated presence. Community Boards, and the use of technology, shared back office services and integration of the myriad of different buildings, officers, outreach workers and other presences, will bring the full range of services of the town hall direct into the local market town and, even more critically, straight into individual households and people's lives.

**Sharing the benefits**

The approach will be to spread the benefits equitably. Rather than centralising back office services in one or two locations, key specialisms will be led from different parts of the county, ensuring that employment opportunities from these help meet our regeneration priorities for parts of the county. Thus shared functions could be developed and located in any combination of the following:



So as well as an integrated democratic and frontline presence in every significant community – from the primary school and mobile library upwards – the council will be rooted through employment and major presence in key centres across Cumbria. All this will be supported by innovative use of IT.



# Chapter Three

## How will services be better through Cumbria Council?

We have set out how the new council will have capacity, ability and determination to work from citizens and communities upwards, through democratic and community engagement structures to address public expectations and the objectives of the White Paper. We now move on to describe how this approach to engagement, and to structure, will enhance delivery of key services.

### 3.1 Liveability, economic development and enterprise

Some of the most obvious benefits from a unitary Cumbria come in this key area of liveability – including areas of service such as:

- Environmental services
- Waste management and street cleaning
- Highways and transportation
- Planning and Development including Economic Development
- Cultural services
- Housing and affordability.

In each of these there are real opportunities for transformation of approach through integration across the tiers, with strategic policy development and standards applied countywide, but with devolved local delivery and integration through multi-disciplinary teams.

#### **Environmental services**

These services range from statutory Environmental Health provision through to street scene operational services. They need to reflect the diverse needs

of urban and rural communities as well as the 16 million tourists visiting Cumbria each year.

Our vision is to create multifunctional teams geared around community needs and aspirations. In addition to planned activities on a programmed basis, they will have the capacity to respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies.

Key improvements will include:

- A single council approach developed with Parish Councils and Community Boards allowing strategic, efficient and effective approach to environmental issues, addressing rural and urban issues and responsive to local need
- Ability to work across all the issues impacting on the community safety agenda – noise nuisance, pest control, enforcement, air quality monitoring and food hygiene
- Integration of inspection and advice for businesses, reducing the burden on them and improving the quality of service.

#### **Waste management and street cleaning**

Responsibility for these important aspects of quality of life are fragmented across county and district. The Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership (Resource Cumbria) already coordinates waste management activity. This partnership between councils and other key organisations is driving implementation and recognised as best practice. However it still means seven authorities working in seven different ways to achieve aims and objectives.

Key improvements will include:

- An opportunity to develop an integrated street cleansing service which links efficiently; litter picking, waste collection, grounds

maintenance and street sweeping. Many of the contracts for these services are currently let independently of each other and work to different schedules and specification standards

- An opportunity to provide consistency of waste collection and to review collection rounds, working practices and staffing levels
- An opportunity to develop a service provider network on the ground to work with the community on street scene and waste collection issues
- Ability to negotiate consistent and more effective recycling contracts ending the current postcode lottery of different boxes, bins and bags in neighbouring districts
- A review of the existing multi layered Recycling Credits Scheme
- Development of a strategy across the whole county for the not for profit sector to work on improving recycling in hard to reach areas and to develop appropriate funding packages
- A review of the existing collection rounds to provide a more efficient routing system
- Consideration of the financial implications of existing collecting contract arrangements and their expiry dates
- Avoidance of delays in service provision due to existing land ownership issues, e.g. fly tipping
- A review of best practice within the existing district collection scheme, i.e. alternate weekly collection, two bag scheme, smaller bins etc
- A countywide strategy for litter and graffiti management
- An opportunity to investigate the high cost per head of some of the collection authorities
- A review of the commercial waste collection arrangements and weights

- The change of status will allow for funding to be targeted on the 3R's – reduce, reuse, recycle
- To remove some of the duplication that exists in current responsibilities, e.g. street sweeping and combining County and District street cleaning schedules for greater efficiency
- A countywide strategy for abandoned vehicles with strong links to Police and community safety.

The new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy will pull together these strands into a deliverable plan.

### Highways and transportation

This service will need to manage maintenance and improvement of the network of 7,700km of roads and footways, 44,000 street lights, 1,300 bridges and all associated infrastructure with an estimated asset value of £5bn. It will also champion support for sustainable public transport provided commercially and by community and voluntary sector schemes providing critical services across Cumbria. Key challenges to be tackled include:

- Accessibility in rural areas to key centres for employment and services
- High accident rates in rural areas and communities with multiple deprivation
- Network conditions because of the network size, volume of visitor traffic, high maintenance costs due to geography, weather conditions, environmental constraints and lack of strength and drainage
- Congestion in both urban and rural areas at certain times.

The new Council will enable a new partnership between a central team dealing with policies, standards, budgets, partnership relationships and contract management, and area based delivery of the service. It will build on the hotline approach to defects and service requests. Cumbria Highways Partnership can absorb streetscene contracts or other related work, either on transfer to Cumbria Council, or as 'novated' contracts run out.

It will avoid duplication of effort, ensure consistent standards and enable budgets to be allocated across the county according to need, rather than the claimed amounts.

Critically, Cumbria Council will look to accelerate involvement of local communities through their parish or town councils in service delivery. The parish handyman or lengthsman will be promoted together with their links to response teams and to the parish or Community Board as a basis for local management of the street scene or local area network.

Key improvements will:

- Clarify the service provider for network users to give them a clear point of contact
- Remove the ambiguity created by claimed maintenance rights of urban unclassified roads in Carlisle
- Integrate on and off-street parking provision into a single service, with economies in systems, enforcement, appeals adjudication and residents parking administration
- Maximise external funding for the highway network through a single regeneration and development structure
- Facilitate the integration of land use and transport planning through the local planning and development control functions
- Increase accessibility through a common and consistent approach to concessionary fares
- Draw together administration of concessionary fares, building on Cumbria's highly successful NOW card
- Create scope to integrate all support for community transport (including dial-a-ride) helping the voluntary sector with a single policy on funding taking account of recent government initiatives
- Increase scope to plan public transport alongside service provision
- Bring together footway and road lighting offering economies of scale, consistency of standards and increased funding opportunities
- Provide a single local authority for coastal protection, flooding and land drainage issues
- Enable the development of street scene or local area management by combining a wider range of responsibilities and functions.

## Planning and development

These services lie at the heart of the place shaping agenda, to enable and encourage sustainable economic growth. There is a major opportunity to integrate service delivery across a shared planning service, bringing together political and managerial leadership of currently fragmented areas including; building control, development control, planning and transport policy, economic development, environmental initiatives and community development.

Approximately 7,500 planning decisions are taken in Cumbria every year, most by staff acting within published policies, with 10% determined by a committee. This will be an activity for area level determination by Area Development Control Committees in the new council.

Key improvements will include:

- Delivery at a local level with integration across building and development control staff working alongside economic development expertise to organize delivery of projects
- Use of improved customer access points in each of the Community Board areas to enable points of contact with the public
- Management integration across building control, development control and economic development activity to secure effective collaboration, particularly benefitting the business community through more joined-up regulation
- Development of a single Local Development Framework (LDF) reducing overheads and

enabling Cumbria to be planned as a coherent unit and for Cumbria's LDF to be fully integrated with the Local Area Agreement as required by the White Paper

- Creation of a Cumbria wide process for accepting and recording planning and development control applications – a single e-planning system and ICT support improving quality and ease of use for the public and developers
- Ability to use economic forecasting and local knowledge to support key planning decisions
- Improved ability to train and develop people for jobs across the county in an area where skills shortages are critical and each current council is too small to develop effective in-house training and development programmes
- Potential savings through joint working with the Lake District National Park.

### Cultural Services

Culture plays a crucial role in our lives. It helps us discover more about our surroundings, our history and ourselves; it regenerates communities and brings people together; it contributes to the local economy; and it makes our life more enjoyable.

There is a unique opportunity to shape the cultural life of Cumbria through the provision of a coordinated and coherent service covering libraries, archives, sports and recreation, museums, and the arts. The challenges of scarce resources, changing attitudes and the opportunities offered to strengthen communities through artistic and creative activity mean that a single approach to cultural development, based on a single cultural strategy, is urgently needed. Better coordination will help unlock the potential economic developments from arts and culture building on world class opportunities like Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter:

Key improvements will include:

- The ability to maximise the value from libraries as the basis for one stop advice and information across all key Cumbria Council services

- Integration with adult social care, children and young people agendas
- Removal of barriers to strategic development constrained by District boundaries
- A consistent approach to opportunities for funding from regional and national initiatives
- Greater scope for local delivery and more services to reflect local heritage and culture
- More integrated access to cultural facilities and ability to ensure these are targeted and can support healthy living in key priority areas.

### Housing and affordability

District and County Councils are already working well together through the Sub Regional Housing Strategy to secure effective integration on a range of issues. A Cumbria Council will be able to adopt a more joined-up approach and one which makes the connections between issues such as housing and social care, affordable housing and unlocking economic potential, high quality housing and increasing opportunities for inward investment.

In particular, this will ensure that the Supporting People Programme is fully integrated with all housing services.

There is a strong and consistent call for more affordable and better quality housing in Cumbria and in particular to meet affordability needs of local people and businesses. A Cumbria Council will be able to deliver a coherent strategy for issues such as application of Section 106 agreements.

A new council will facilitate the delivery of a stronger single housing strategy based on assessment of needs. Registered social landlords would be key partners in delivery and consistent standards and priorities established. Cumbria Council would lobby powerfully regionally and nationally for resources and would ensure more effective delivery of appropriate affordable homes through a single strategy for the full range of tenures, a single enabling planning framework and a single delivery framework. It will also be able to take an overview of tenure across Cumbria and to work, through consultation

and engagement with tenants, to ensure the spread of best practice and opportunity.

Key improvements will include:

- Integration with adult social care and children and young people agendas
- Removing barriers to housing allocations constrained by district boundaries
- A more consistent approach to housing vulnerable people including those facing homelessness, domestic violence, needing support housing or move on accommodation
- Consistent criteria for home improvement grants, tackling accessibility and encouraging independent living
- A consistent approach to developer contributions via the use of Section 106 agreements
- More consistent use of housing enablers and strategic approach to the use of publicly owned land and surplus assets
- Integration of housing services with the safer communities agenda, with support to tackle domestic violence and anti-social behaviour.

## 3.2 Children, young people and families

Cumbria Council will be able to ensure effective integration across different parts of the education system and the role they play in economic growth. This will bring together the work of colleges of further education, work-based learning, providers of apprenticeships, and the new University for Cumbria to help secure the future prosperity of the county. There is a real opportunity to integrate activities addressing exclusion, child poverty and well-being.

The Cumbria Children and Young People's Partnership and County Council's Children's Services directorate is newly formed and already responsible for enhancing collaborative working across all agencies with responsibility for services for children and families. This includes District services for housing

and leisure for instance. The objective is to ensure all agencies work in an integrated way to enhance outcomes for all children, regardless of levels of need.

These range from schools and support to schools, and early access to parent support through to high risk, high dependency services such as child protection, looked after children and services for children with complex disabilities. This covers children from 9 months to 18 years and beyond, where high level of care exists (e.g. care leavers and children with disabilities).

Cumbria is working on improving the effectiveness of universal services like schools and reshaping services for vulnerable children so they can be provided as early as possible. This means delivery as locally as possible at a community level. This radical reshaping of services is at an embryonic stage which will be enhanced and accelerated through Cumbria Council. A unified council will fully integrate preventative and early intervention services around the needs of children and young people. Maximum value will be secured from extended schools and children's centres.

A key challenge for Cumbria is to help more adults enter or re-enter the workforce, driving up demand for learning and leading to business growth. Cumbria Council will be a powerful and effective partner to the whole higher and further education sector, as well as to business.

Key improvements will include:

- Reduced organizational boundaries – providing efficiencies and enhancing involvement in frontline delivery
- Greater scope for local delivery and opportunity for more services to be delivered there
- Better support for homeless families through coordination of housing and social care needs
- Better help for homeless young people through integration of housing, social care and health needs
- More integrated access to leisure and sporting facilities and ability to ensure these are

targeted and can support healthy living in key priority areas

- Bringing more people into direct contact with the council by developing more opportunities for co-location of youth projects within local service hubs, building on successes like the Penrith Rural Foyer
- Tackling worklessness in the county through better links between children's centres and the provision of advice and support on benefits and employment
- Giving young people including looked after children a powerful voice in decision making including through Community Boards, online forums and other innovative approaches. The views of children and young people will help shape Cumbria Council

### 3.3 Healthier communities and older people

Cumbria is responding to the need to shift services for vulnerable people from acute to preventative, from residential to community, and offering more choice and control to those who use them. Local services are central to supporting independence and quality of life for the growing numbers who are living longer, having long term needs and for whom care begins in the home. Critically, this provides a chance to bring together the planning and delivery of social care and housing for the first time. It will also secure proper integration with the health sector.

The county faces significant financial pressures and opportunities from a growing elderly population, and with people with disabilities that entail complex care needs. Having a strong strategic centre where partners plan together to meet these growing needs, and where services are commissioned jointly and performance managed to be locally responsive is critical and will be unlocked by Cumbria Council's fresh approach.

Key improvements will include:

- Developing a coherent vision for understanding, working with and addressing

the expectations of older people in the county, developing our understanding beyond a narrow focus on care into the full well-being remit

- Changing from a one size fits all model of reactive care, often delivered in hospitals or residential settings to person centred, responsive services offered flexibly
- Ensuring accommodation and care needs are planned and delivered in a joined-up way, for instance people with long-term care conditions who require adaptations to their homes to maximise independence must be effectively catered for
- Enabling communities to support their most vulnerable members and expanding choice through offering direct payments and individualised budgets where people can take control of resources to pay for the care and support they need
- Promoting health and well being so people have information on health issues, including integration with the leisure and recreation functions currently dislocated from the social care and well being agenda
- Getting a single place to go for information based on a person centered approach – integrating advice on housing with care needs so people can move to housing which meets their needs or adaptations enabling them to continue to live where they choose
- Supporting Voluntary and Community Sector provision of local preventative services, enabling these groups to work with integrated council teams to make a difference in their community
- Promoting full inclusion of people in their communities, helping people with disabilities to exercise their rights as citizens and access council services like libraries, leisure centres and public transport.

### 3.4 Safer and stronger communities

Through the LAA, Cumbria has developed a countywide Safer and Stronger Communities partnership, meeting the needs of a countywide Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Key priorities include better coordination on road safety; national priorities like respect; and tackling the fear of crime in the context of relatively low levels of actual offending. Key challenges being addressed include inconsistent co-terminosity although this is improving with the development of the PCT.

The county Fire and Rescue service is a Category One responder with operational needs dictating its shape and management structures. However, it is a very community based service with 33 of its 38 fire stations staffed by retained firefighters, drawn from the immediate local community.

Cumbria has already been recognized nationally for its success in utilising these highly motivated locally based staff to deliver the wider community safety agenda. Cumbria Council will further enhance this capacity and harness it to achievement of LAA targets reliant on inter-agency working – for instance around addressing the high levels of people killed and seriously injured on Cumbria's roads. It will also secure close integration at local level between Community Boards and neighbourhood policing arrangements

Key improvements will include:

- Improved use of ward based intelligence to help Community Boards to understand key crime and safety issues in their areas
- Ability to work effectively across housing and care areas to tackle key fire related challenges for the county including arson – 40% of which happens in just 10 wards, of which five are in the 10% most deprived nationally
- Further integration between fire prevention and waste collection activity – recognising that anti-social behaviour fires, torching bulky items of rubbish at the roadside, is a key issue in parts of the county. At present this has been highly successful in one area – reducing fires by 20%, but it is not being pursued elsewhere.

### 3.5 Central and support services

As well as these transformational improvements in frontline services, the new Cumbria Council will have a unique opportunity to achieve efficiencies and radical service improvements.

A single council will enable:

- Reduced time and effort on non-added value transactional processing
- Clearer supplier – customer relationships
- Organisational and culture change to put the customer first across all council activities
- Process re-engineering and workforce remodelling.

A key feature will be to ensure that as much business as possible can be transacted at the front office, where people can speak direct to the council, and that which remains necessary as back office activity is delivered by physical locations across the county rather than in a single place, maximising economic development benefits.

#### Front office services

At the heart of the new council will be an integrated customer relationship management programme, building on early, but partial, implementation of the Northgate system. Northgate is currently used by four of the seven local authorities, but as a separate system in each rather than one single joined up CRM database. Integration will overcome the frustrations for service users of having to interact with different ways of working from council to council. Underpinning this will be a wide ranging business process improvement programme designed to reduce dependence on back office staff to handle front of office tasks, empowering staff in direct contact with citizens to handle their enquiries effectively.

Key improvements will include:

- Consistent level of customer service delivered to customers

- Customer focused staff
- High percentage of customer enquiries resolved first time with a single telephone call
- Efficiency saving from services delivered by multi-skilled staff
- Establishing a customer friendly 'golden number' single point of contact to have all council questions answered – no more: "you need to talk to the District/County Council"
- Economies of scale as a single system covering the county is delivered through a range of access points designed through community engagement in Community Boards
- Multiple customer service channels making it easy for the citizen to get the information they want, when they want it
- More rapid delivery and tracking the progress of services.

A shared service centre approach would also deliver a common pooled approach to revenues and benefits collection, learning from experience in Cumbria in delivering this service to a range of councils right across England.

### Human resources

Considerable efficiencies and economies of scale are possible through HR management, service and operational integration, creating multi-functional teams and multi-skilled employees.

We will develop a set of values in which public and staff are treated with dignity and respect, in an organisation recognising and embracing equality and diversity.

Managing a new combined workforce of 15,000 will enable integration of diverse systems, structures, payrolls, operational practice and pay structures. It will rapidly provide better career options for staff as well as enabling more flexible use of resources – particularly important in areas of current skill shortages where people with scarce skills, such as planning development control, are on a merry-go-round passing between competing councils.

The implementation of a modern and scalable HR system early in the transition period will enable Cumbria Council to be prepared and able to migrate all staff details into a single system solution.

Key improvements will include:

- Much improved workforce development planning and resource management, with better career paths, development and succession planning opportunities
- Standardisation and consistency in service delivery
- Potential for significant efficiencies through business process improvement and better use of technology
- Higher quality and more robust management information to help tackle sickness absence
- More effectively managed and improved workforce absence levels
- Eliminating duplication of effort
- Automating manual HR processes that impact data entry into payroll
- Improving reliability and consistency of data
- Informing effective decision making and strategic workforce analysis.

The experience of our commercial partners will help drive the necessary change and implementation systems.

## ICT infrastructure

The County Council, through its ICT partner, is implementing a modern voice and data network and the contract specification is designed to enable expansion to cover current district activities.

A key element of this is resilience and this facility could also be rolled out for use by the Cumbria PCT and the police.

Key benefits will include:

- Business continuity provision across Cumbria through resilient data centres
- Modern fit for purpose countywide data network, capable of providing converged voice and data services
- Facilitation of joined-up government through a shared service infrastructure
- Consolidated management of voice and data services eg billing, line and call management
- Cheaper telecom services through economies of scale
- Remote and modern infrastructure management with modern state of art capability
- Future proofed and expandable infrastructure
- Consolidation of services through shared service platforms for delivery of strategic projects, eg financial and back office customer contact etc.



# Chapter Four

## The summary financial case

### 4.1 Overall conclusions – payback, ongoing efficiencies and transition costs

A unitary Cumbria will provide ongoing efficiencies of £22.2m a year once the unitary is fully established. Transition costs are estimated at £21.3m, with £6.9m likely to be incurred in the year prior to establishment of the unitary council and the bulk of the remaining transition costs occurring in 2009/10. The scheduling of the transitional costs and efficiencies generated is such that all transitional costs will be fully recovered in 2.5 years.

Part of the transition costs occurring in 2008/9 will fall to Cumbria County Council to finance and this will present a challenge to the authority, with general reserves already pared to the minimum. The County Council is expecting to build up earmarked reserves in 2006/7 and 2007/8 to help fund these transition costs. Given the prohibition on borrowing to cover these costs, the County Council will make clear its strategy for providing this sum in the revenue budget for 2007/08 and beyond - to be decided at the County Council meeting in February 2007.

The intention is that half of the forecast efficiencies will be returned to the council tax payer with the remaining half being available for reinvestment in front line services, helping to improve service levels across Cumbria.

Part of the efficiencies will be used to set a uniform council tax across Cumbria. The intention is to harmonise council tax at the lowest rate currently being charged, in effect reducing council tax by £5.1m which is equivalent to an average 2.6% reduction across Cumbria compared with the inflationary increase which would have occurred i.e. if the norm were a 4% inflationary rise the average council tax increase in 2009/10 would be 1.4%.

Allerdale sets the lowest combined county and district council tax level and this would become the norm for Cumbria with relative reductions in council taxes in other districts, ranging from £62 in Barrow (where council taxes are highest) to £19 in Eden (where council taxes are second lowest), based on 2006/7 figures. Harmonising council tax at the lowest level increases the pay back period from 2.5 years to 3.3 years.

In addition a unitary council would seek to limit council tax increases for the first 3 years. By way of illustration, setting council tax 1% below the assumed capping limit of 5%. Council tax foregone would be £2m in the first year, £4m in the second and £6m in the third year. In these circumstances harmonising council tax at the lowest level and restricting council tax increases in the first three years, the unitary council would be foregoing £11.1m of potential council tax revenues, utilising just under half of the forecast efficiencies, allowing council tax to be set at a shade under 4%.

The County Council commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to advise on the preparation of the bid. The financial savings and costs have been incorporated in PwC's financial model which has been prepared for the White Paper. Details of the financial proposals are available in an accompanying document.

## 4.2 Efficiency strategy and efficiency targets for a unitary Cumbria

Cumbria County Council has a good track record in achieving its annual 2.5% Gershon efficiency targets. It is on course to meet the full three year target within the first two years, with major efficiencies being realised through its commercial strategic partners and through improvements in cost effectiveness. Following the first round of Gershon targets, the annual efficiency target is expected to be increased to 3%.

Cumbria Council will deliver further efficiencies, from the reduced number of members across Cumbria and from rationalising back office support functions – the costs of ‘being in business’. Efficiencies in ‘doing business’. will come from integration of six district council activities such as revenues and benefits where one pan Cumbria operation will replace the current six separate operations. Longer term synergies will come from integration of county and district functions in areas such as waste management, better working between housing and adult social care, leisure and cultural activities, and planning arrangements as shown below.

Cost and performance benchmarking has been extensively used to help identify efficiencies. For example CIPFA statistics for Cumbrian authorities

have been compared against each other and against national upper quartiles including new unitary authorities such as East Riding. The intention is to ratchet up performance standards to those of the best in Cumbria and then seek to position the authority in the upper quartile.

### Efficiencies in the costs of being in business

A Cumbria Council will provide significant opportunities for making savings in the costs of supporting the democratic process and back office functions. Once fully established there are estimated to be annual savings of £18.9m in these areas.

### Corporate and democratic core costs

These are the costs incurred in supporting elected members and the central chief executive function. Across Cumbria these costs total some £18.0m with the County Council accounting for £6.7m (37%). In contrast the County Council accounts for some 80% of local authority expenditure across Cumbria. Cumbria Council will encompass a number of additional functions. However, there should be very significant scope for efficiencies in these corporate and democratic core costs. The financial model shows corporate and democratic core costs of £12.4m, yielding an annual saving of £5.6m. This is considered a prudent figure as there is some uncertainty regarding the detailed composition of these costs.

### Expected efficiencies for a unitary Cumbria

	£m
<b>Being in business</b>	
a) Corporate and Democratic Core	5.6
b) Central Services	1.5
c) Overheads	11.8
Sub Total	18.9
<b>Doing business</b>	
d) Aggregation of district council activities	
Revenues and Benefits	1.8
e) Integration of complementary services	1.5
Sub Total	3.3
<b>Total efficiencies</b>	<b>22.2</b>

A Cumbria Council will initially have 84 members, the same number as the present county council, and one chief executive and corporate management team rather than the seven that are required for all the local authorities across Cumbria. The proposal is that there would be a modest increase in the number of councillors following review by the Boundary Committee.

Cumbria Council will need to invest in appropriate support for councillors to undertake their frontline role and in effective arrangements for locality working. The financial model includes investment of £1.5m for locality support and member budgets.

### **Central services**

Across Cumbria central service costs total £11.1m, with the County Council accounting for £3.6m (32%). As for corporate and democratic core costs, the expectation is that there would be significant savings from the establishment of a unitary council. The financial model shows central service costs yielding annual savings of £1.5m. In addition there are significant savings in revenues and benefits, classed as central services costs, and examined as part of the efficiencies resulting from amalgamation of district council activities.

### **Back office functions**

Local authorities provide central returns to Government of their costs. Many back office costs such as HR, finance, legal support, ICT, property, procurement are apportioned to front line services, so the full costs of these activities can be difficult to determine. As part of the financial modelling undertaken by the County Council, the costs of all these back office functions have been identified across Cumbria. Clearly Cumbria Council would only require one set of back office functions and there should be significant scope for savings. The financial model shows annual savings of £11.8m in back office support costs.

Considerable opportunities for efficiency savings can be made from the rationalisation of property, better use of IT and improved facilities management. Potential savings have not been incorporated in the financial model as there is a need in the first instance to reinvest savings and capital receipts from the disposal of surplus properties in fit for purpose accommodation

and for establishing effective locality arrangements. Efficiencies would also need to cover any additional costs where staff re-locate.

### **Efficiencies in the costs of doing business**

Whilst the major drive for efficiencies is expected to come from rationalisation of corporate and democratic core, central services and back office functions, integration will be secured from district council functions such as council tax collection, which are currently duplicated, and through synergies between district council and county council functions in areas where responsibilities are currently shared and where services are complementary, such as waste management and housing services. The County Council has identified savings of £3.3m across these areas.

### **Bringing together district council activities**

A unitary Cumbria would require one administration of revenues and benefits. Benchmarking across the county suggests that savings of £1.8m could be realised.

There is scope for further efficiency from integration of other district council activities in such areas as housing and leisure.

### **Synergies between complementary district council and county council activities**

Whilst local authorities are looking to work together more cooperatively through arrangements such as the Local Area Agreement and Cumbria Strategic Partnership, Cumbria Council will accelerate these moves and achieve rapid progress. Without a unitary Cumbria there is a risk that the pace of change will be insufficient to realise the significant savings that should be achieved.

For example the Districts and the County Council are working together to appoint a strategic contractor for waste disposal and a unitary Cumbria would ensure full integration of waste management services which should help achieve recycling targets. Savings are yet to be quantified but should help offset the forecast growth in waste costs over the next years as landfill taxes and other cost pressures impact on waste activities.

In addition there is scope for synergies in such areas as Adult Social Care, Housing and Planning; District leisure services and the county's libraries and cultural activities. The financial model covers savings of £1.5m in these areas.

## 4.3 Transitional costs and redundancies

There will be significant costs in establishing a unitary Cumbria. The County Council estimates these costs at £21.3m, including £13.2m to cover the costs of redundancies.

### Transitional costs

Costs would be incurred in planning and setting up the new unitary council. The County Council estimates that £8.1m would be incurred in setting up a Cumbria Council.

### Redundancy costs

There would be significant redundancy costs in establishing a unitary council. A new unitary council would require one corporate management team. There would also be a reduction in the overall numbers of senior managers and directly related support staff.

The transitional costs span the establishment of the new authority, with £6.9m expected to be incurred in 2008/9, the year preceding the establishment of the unitary council. The arrangements for funding these costs are discussed in 4.8 Affordability.

## 4.4 Revenue Support Grant settlements

It is understood that DCLG has yet to come to a view on whether the grant settlements of predecessor authorities would simply be added together to form RSG for a new unitary authority or if the whole RSG model would be re-run (removing the 'fixed element' of RSG, at £325,000 each for the disappearing authorities). This is complicated by the year of new unitaries, 2009/10, being the second year of the proposed 3 year RSG settlement.

## 4.5 Council Tax assumptions

Currently the six district councils set their own council tax levels for their populations, together with collecting precepts for the County Council and the police authority (standard amounts across Cumbria) and precepts for the parishes (which all vary). There is a lot of volatility from Parish to Parish in the levels of precept, dependent on the budgets and activities at parish level. A unitary Cumbria would have a standard council tax across the whole of Cumbria and the only variation would be for parish precepts. In addition Eden District Council raises £130,000 a year through special expenses and a new authority would need to review these arrangements.

The range of District Council precepts is from £127 in Allerdale to £189 in Barrow, a difference of £62. Ironically, the average level of parish / town precept is highest in Allerdale at £27 and lowest in Barrow at £3 (Barrow being mainly unparished). Inclusion of the average parish precepts reduces the difference between highest and lowest to the £38 mentioned above.

The headline Band D tax refers to properties assessed as being in the £68k to £88k region. Council tax levels for the other bands are in fixed proportions to the Band D tax, as set out below:

Band A	(up to £40k)	6/9
Band B	(£40k to £52k)	7/9
Band C	(£52k to £68k)	8/9
Band D	(£68k to £88k)	1
Band E	(£88k to £120k)	11/9
Band F	(£120k to £160k)	13/9
Band G	(£160k to £320k)	15/9
Band H	(over £320k)	2

An important decision for the new unitary Council would be the future level of council tax across Cumbria and its distribution across the different parts of the County.

It would make little sense to continue with the local differences just described, particularly if the existing District Council areas ceased to exist.

'Equalisation' aims to have the same level of Band D Council Tax across Cumbria save for parish precepts which will continue to vary.

To arrive at that point means that council tax payers in those parts of the County with higher Band D taxes would wait for the other parts of the County to catch them up. So, council tax increases would be higher, say, in Allerdale than in Barrow until this levelling process had run its course.

The intention is that equalisation or 'levelling' can only take place if Allerdale's council tax increases provide the maximum and all other areas face increases of less than Allerdale's increase.

What this means, in broad terms, is that council tax levels would be set at the lowest level of Cumbria's six districts. In 2006/7 Allerdale set the lowest combined county and district council tax level and this would become the norm for all other district areas. There would be reductions in council taxes in five districts, ranging from £62 in Barrow (where council taxes are highest) to £19 in Eden (where council taxes are second lowest). Assuming a general increase in council taxes of 4% (see below), the council tax foregone by a unitary authority would be £5.1m, equivalent to a 2.6% reduction in council tax across Cumbria.

### Cost of harmonisation of council tax

	Tax Base Band Ds	Tax Base weighting  %	County and District: Year 1		County and District: Year 2	
			1 year % loss	weighted product	1 year % loss	weighted product
Allerdale	31,459	18.1	-	-	-	-
Barrow	21,211	12.2	4.0	0.49	1.4	0.17
Carlisle	33,563	19.3	3.8	0.73	-	-
Copeland	22,138	12.8	2.8	0.36	-	-
Eden	20,216	11.7	1.7	0.20	-	-
South Lakeland	45,031	25.9	2.5	0.65	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173,618</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>2.43%</b>		<b>0.17%</b>
				= £4.79m		= £0.33m

In practice the arrangements for 'levelling' council tax are likely to be phased, as Barrow council tax is more than 4% higher than Allerdale's level of council tax. Hence council tax in Barrow would be frozen in 2009/10 and increase by 2.6% in 2010/11.

In addition to equalising council tax across Cumbria, a unitary authority would need to consider the general level of council tax increases. The County Council's medium term financial strategy incorporates an assumption that council taxes should increase by a maximum of 5% a year, the level at which the Government is likely to cap council tax increases. This projection is based on the need for equal pay arrears to be financed, costs preferably being spread over a number of years. With a unitary authority, significant efficiencies are forecast. Part of these efficiencies will be required to pay for 'levelling' council tax and there are proposals to reinvest part of the efficiencies in front line services. However, there may also be scope for reducing general council tax increases.

Rather than continuing the County Council's policy of setting council tax increases at just under

the Government's capping level, the new authority could set council tax at say 1% below the capping level, say 4% a year for the first three years. By way of illustration this would cost the new authority £2m in the first year, £4m in the second year, and £6m in the third year.

Bringing together council tax levelling and pegging council tax to 1% below the Government's capping levels would cost the unitary authority £11.1m in council tax revenues foregone, half of the unitary council's planned efficiencies.

The following table shows the levels of council tax and percentage increases by district over the first three years of the unitary authority, assuming a 4% general increase and achieving council tax harmonisation within two years. Council tax harmonisation would be achieved by 2010/11 across Cumbria. For all districts bar Barrow, council taxes would be harmonised by 2009/10. For Barrow there would be no increases in council tax in 2009/10 and only a 2.6% increase in 2010/11.

#### Illustrative levels of council tax by district

	Allerdale	Barrow	Carlisle	Copeland	Eden	S. Lakeland
Band D Tax 2006/7	£	£	£	£	£	£
County	1,019.43	1,019.43	1,019.43	1,019.43	1,019.43	1,019.43
District	127.24	189.40	171.03	158.37	146.60	154.97
Sub Total	1,146.67	1,208.83	1,190.46	1,177.80	1,166.03	1,174.40
Assuming Maximum 4% Council Tax Rises						
2009/10	1,192.54	1,208.83	1,192.54	1,192.54	1,192.54	1,192.54
% increase	4.0%	0%	0.2%	1.3%	2.3%	1.5%
2010/11	1,240.24	1,240.24	1,240.24	1,240.24	1,240.24	1,240.24
% increase	4.0%	2.6%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
2011/12	1,289.85	1,289.85	1,289.85	1,289.85	1,289.85	1,289.85
% increase	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%

*Note that the projections from 2009/10, the first year of a unitary authority, are based on 2006/7 council taxes. In practice council taxes are expected to increase in both 2007/8 and 2008/9 by 5% a year for the county council precept and by some 3% to 5% a year for district councils, so the figures above are not absolute forecasts, more used to illustrate how equalisation would work.*

### Major budget issues for a new unitary authority

All local authorities will be preparing 3 year medium term financial plans from 2008 to 2011 heavily influenced by the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

The drive to deliver efficiencies will be greater than ever, alongside pressures on service budgets and the desire to limit the rate of increase in council taxes.

Plans are already in place in Cumbria to address those concerns. Even so, a unitary authority would be more likely to generate back office savings, than front line economies, in order to meet Cumbria's challenges such as:

- demographic changes, including a higher than average (and growing) proportion of elderly people – particularly the over 85s
- increasing costs and standards for waste collection and disposal
- increasing pension costs
- equal pay arrears and single status costs going forward

- the shortage of affordable housing in many parts of the County and the numbers of homeless people.

The nature of these challenges, and the present uncertainties about their exact costs, will lead to difficult choices. The table below gives some options about levels of council tax and sums available for re-investment for a future unitary authority.

## 4.6 Funding and use of reserves

The financial model shows the impact of establishing a unitary authority compared to the 2006/07 budgets of the seven Cumbrian local authorities. The table overleaf shows the impacts on the combined budgets and reserves. Relative to the base position there are reductions in council tax to allow for harmonisation and pegging of council tax increases below current assumptions. The table also shows drawings on reserves of £6.9m in 2008/09 and £6.1m in 2009/10. From then the recurrent savings exceed the reductions in council tax and transition costs and there are consequently additions to reserves. At this stage it is assumed that the transition costs are all revenue and there are no financing costs.

### Options for reducing council tax and re-investing in services

	£m
Savings from unitary	22.2
Council tax foregone in harmonising tax at lowest level	5.1
Balance	17.1
a) Council tax foregone if set at 4.5%, 0.5% below cap	3.0
Available for reinvestment in services	14.1
b) Council tax foregone if set at 4.0%, 1.0% below cap	6.0
Available for reinvestment in services	11.1
c) Council tax foregone if set at 3.5%, 1.5% below cap	9.0
Available for reinvestment in services	8.1

### Funding of establishment of unitary authority relative to 2006/07 budgets

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Cost of services including schools	782.7	782.7	789.6	782.1	770.9	764.8	763.5
Financed by:							
Council Tax	206.9	206.9	206.9	200.2	197.9	195.9	195.8
Government Grants	575.8	575.8	575.8	575.8	575.8	575.8	575.8
Reserves	-	-	6.9	6.1	-2.8	-6.9	-8.1

## 4.7 Affordability

The financial model shows a unitary Cumbria achieving the pay back tests. However, there is a need to examine carefully the funding of the transition costs. Costs of £6.9m are likely to be incurred in the year before a unitary Cumbria is established and part of these would fall to the County Council to fund. The Council's finances are already stretched in meeting equal pay costs and budgetary pressures in waste management and as a result of demographic growth. Reserves have been pared to the minimum but in 2006/7 and 2007/8 the Council would expect to establish earmarked reserves to help fund transitional costs. In addition the Council along with other county councils is discussing with Government the arrangements for ensuring that district council general balances are ring fenced for a new authority and whether there is scope for accessing these balances in the transition period. The funding and reserves projections set out above show that a unitary Cumbria would have strong finances.

## 4.8 Risk management

As part of the construction of the financial model and business case, key risks have been identified. These include:

- The financial case proves undeliverable, with costs understated and efficiency overstated leading to us being unable to meet transitional costs. As part of the financial modelling, sensitivity analysis has been undertaken examining the impact of different assumptions

Assuming costs were understated by 20% and efficiencies overstated by 20%, the payback would increase from 2.5 years to 3.3 years. This would most likely impact on service improvements as guarantees have been made about council tax levels. Further analysis has been undertaken to determine the effect on payback if efficiencies were to be delayed. With a 12 month slippage the payback would increase to 3.8 years. Overall the sensitivity analysis suggests that the critical 5 year payback should be achieved.

- If the proposal is not supported across Cumbria. However there has been engagement with partner organisations, with pan-Cumbria bodies supporting the proposal. District Councils have supplied information requested by the County Council and have contributed positively to various workshops examining the scope for better working in areas such as revenues and benefits, housing, waste management, risk and support functions. They have done this on the understanding that it does not imply support to the bid. As regards public consultation, four focus groups have been held in December to explore what the public want from local government services. Further consultation is to be undertaken in the New Year following consideration of the proposals by Government
- The proposed governance arrangements prove ineffective. Much work has gone into developing robust governance arrangements to ensure clarity of strategy and effective locality working. The financial model includes

additional resources to support locality working. Transition arrangements will be planned in detail following approval of the proposals to move to the next stage

- The unitary proposals lack national political support. We believe these proposals meet the test set by the government in the White Paper. The external risk of reduced national political enthusiasm we would contend is countered by the robustness of the Cumbria proposals and the clear value for money case presented
- Implementation and people risks. A unitary Cumbria is likely to lead to some uncertainty, including a risk of possible loss of key staff. During transition the council would seek to engage and motivate staff and keep them informed. It will be important to plan the detailed transition arrangements so as to manage these risks, providing clear direction for staff and building up staff morale. A continuing authority gives some measure of stability and there will be a need to extend protection to district council staff. Transition arrangements are examined in the next chapter
- There are difficulties in driving up service standards across Cumbria. A Cumbria Council will set minimum service standards and will aim to raise standards to those of the best. This will take time and resources. The proposals include reinvestment of part of the efficiencies generated by moving to a unitary council. There is also a need to recognise the current budget pressures faced by all councils in Cumbria. Local government funding is expected to be tightened in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.



# Chapter Five

## How we will make it happen - transition

We have a very clear idea of how we will move from the existing arrangements to a new authority, and how the many benefits of this change will be realised. For the new organisation to have the confidence of the public, the transition must be smooth and seamless. The benefits of change must quickly outweigh the inconvenience.

Fundamental to any change management is the development of a detailed and fully resourced implementation plan. We do not underestimate the complexity or scale of this task and so propose the creation of a specific transition team with appointments from county and districts, to lead, monitor and review the transition and implementation process.

Where required we can draw upon additional capacity from the commercial strategic partners of the County and Districts who have demonstrated a willingness to work together and to be flexible in accommodating the changing demands of a local authority.

### 5.1 Legal position

It is critical that Cumbria Council is clearly seen as an entirely new council with a distinct corporate identity. However the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, when enacted, will enable the change to be brought about either by an Order creating a new authority and winding up all existing authorities, or by transferring the functions of District Councils to the existing County Council which would become a unitary authority on 1 April 2009.

Whilst the first approach would help forge the clear identity of the unitary Council from the outset, the continuing Council model would undoubtedly be more cost effective to achieve and would involve least disruption to the provision of county-wide services during the transitional period. In particular there would be no need to transfer property, rights,

liabilities and assets from the existing County Council if the unitary Council is a continuing authority.

Cumbria Council will not involve any boundary changes. It is recommended that unitary status should be effected by an Order winding up and dissolving existing District Councils and transferring their functions to the Cumbria Council, albeit establishing the latter as, for all intents and purposes, an entirely new council. A crucial part of this fresh start will be appointment of a new management team once elected members are in place, able to drive the new Council forward and building a high performance culture.

Transitional arrangements relating to the transfer of functions, staff, property, rights and liabilities are likely to be covered by general regulation provided for in the Bill. Transitional arrangements will require adequate safeguards to secure equity of treatment in relation to staff transfer issues and we have engaged specialist support to advise on this.

In order to ensure a smooth and seamless transition to unitary status, we recommend that elections should be held to a shadow authority in May 2008. The role of the shadow authority would be to prepare the unitary authority for the assumption of all local government functions and full local authority powers from the re-organisation date, to facilitate any budgetary or service planning functions for the unitary authority, and to liaise with all existing Councils to ensure seamless continuity of public service delivery once the Unitary Council is fully operational. During the transitional period from May 2008 to April 2009 existing Councils, including the County Council, would continue to maintain and improve quality service provision whilst preparing for the change. There will be no dip in current performance.

Electoral matters are an important part of the Implementation Order and should be based on the single member wards outlined earlier. A review of electoral arrangements should, however, be

undertaken as quickly as possible by the Boundary Committee to help shape the future democratic base of the unitary authority.

The new legal framework in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, includes the power to make arrangements for the discharge of functions in relation to electoral divisions or wards to individual members and this will be utilised to facilitate effective community working in the Unitary Council.

The timescale for implementation of the proposals would be:

**25 January 2007** - Submission of proposals

**March 2007** - Announcement of Government's preliminary views after evaluation of criteria, to be followed by local stakeholder consultation

**June 2007** - Local government stakeholder consultation ends

**July 2007** - Government's final announcement of areas to be restructured, to be followed by enactment of necessary legislation

**May 2008** - Elections to Cumbria Council

**May 2008** - April 2009 – Shadow Council undertakes establishment of new authority and prepares transfer with existing councils

**1 April 2009** – Cumbria Council up and running

## 5.2 HR Issues

### Organisational structure design

The new Council will be based on an organisational structure able to deliver the vision and key objectives articulated in this bid. In doing so partners and stakeholders will be widely consulted to ensure the structure is also complementary with the achievement of wider community goals and aspirations. In building a new organisation close attention will be paid to the following structural design principles:

- Affordable – ensuring that the new structure takes full account of integration, efficiencies and economies of scale yet retains sufficient corporate and service capacity
- Streamlined – minimising the organisational tiers and optimising managerial spans of control, recognising the potential to simplify the overly hierarchical structure in some councils
- Understandable – ensuring clear reporting lines and accountabilities
- Compatible – ensuring the structure complements those of key partner organisations and council democratic machinery
- Relevant – to delivering strategic objectives and serving local community needs
- Flexible – capable of being adapted to meet rapidly changing circumstances.

### HR policies and protocols

We consider it essential during the transition period to implement a range of key HR Policies and Protocols that will enable a smooth and seamless transfer to the new Council. These are numerous but the most important are:

#### *HR strategy, policies and procedures*

These are essentially self-explanatory but will include Pay Structures and Conditions of Service, together with interim protection arrangements and proposals to harmonise as quickly as possible. Given the complexity and sensitivity of the different Job Evaluation schemes, we do not under-estimate the size of this task and will resource it accordingly.

#### *HR systems*

Modern HR systems will provide quality and meaningful data to inform effective decision making.

A modern and scalable HR and payroll system will be implemented early in the transition period so that the new Authority is prepared and able to migrate all of its staff details into a single system solution.

This will be a vital step in ensuring it has a strategic management capability to address its expected HR needs.

Some examples of benefits that we conclude will be provided are:

- Standardisation and consistency in service delivery
- Potential for significant efficiencies through business process improvement and better use of technology
- Higher quality and more robust management information
- More effectively manage and improve workforce absence levels
- Eliminate duplication of effort
- Automate manual HR processes (eg data entry into payroll) and reduce manual effort
- Improve reliability and consistency of data
- Informed effective decision making
- Improved planning and resource management
- Undertake more strategic workforce analysis
- Corporate identity strengthened
- Improvements to elected members

### ***Transfer and appointment of staff***

We will utilise a combination of previous best practice and principles in dealing with the transfer and appointment of staff to the new Council. We envisage that the majority of staff will be automatically transferred to the new Council under Statutory Transfer Orders (STOs). These cover posts that are unchanged or partially changed in the new structure. Where staff are required to relocate, appropriate “disturbance” allowances will be paid for a specified period of time. Where posts are new, substantially changed or deleted, staff will be declared at risk and appropriate ring-

fenced appointments processes will be established. In this instance, we will operate the principle of “Security before Opportunity”, meaning that staff who have been assimilated into posts cannot apply for others until the ring-fence for staff at risk has been operated. Posts not filled by these methods will then be advertised externally. We recognise that this is a substantial task and will allocate appropriate resources at the earliest possible date to ensure that it is completed successfully.

### ***Redeployment, redundancy and early retirement***

As a result of the proposals we have outlined to achieve integration, efficiencies and economies of scale, we realise that, inevitably, numbers of staff will not be transferred or appointed to posts following the initial processes. To handle this, we will put into place a Redeployment Procedure. In the meantime, we will mitigate the situation by the use of natural wastage, the appropriate use of temporary, fixed term and interim appointments, and by looking at temporary or permanent alternative methods of procuring and delivering certain services, functions or roles. Redundancies may arise during the transition period, including the need for Early Retirement, and these will be dealt with accordingly, taking account of prevailing regulations.

### ***Communications***

We consider that comprehensive, clear and consistent communication with County and District Council staff is one of the key ingredients of a smooth and successful transfer. We will place high emphasis on this during the transition period and will utilise a wide variety of methods to do so, including face to face briefings as often as possible.

### ***Culture change***

We have outlined the characteristics we would see as exemplifying our organisational culture and values. However, a key task during the transition is to articulate these in more detail and compare them with the existing traits within the County Council and the District Council. This gap analysis will determine the extent of the work to be done to ensure the new Council begins to move towards the desired culture and values as quickly as possible. To help us with this important piece of work and

to ensure ownership, we will enlist the support of a representative cross-section of District and County staff, working in focus groups over a period of time. The assimilation of the new organisational culture and values will be a key initial leadership and developmental task for the senior Elected Members and Managers.

### 5.3 Creating a new brand and corporate culture in one council Cumbria

The new single council for Cumbria provides an opportunity to re-launch local government in Cumbria on the basis of a very clear brand premise which cuts through the clutter and confusion of other models.

The new brand will bring greater clarity for local people about who delivers local public services and how they access them. It will be the basis for clearer democratic accountability - leaving no doubt who citizens vote for, and what can be achieved on their behalf. The new brand will also help give local people a very clear understanding of how they can influence local decision making and get things done in their communities.

The new brand will help build a new corporate culture within the new organisation – helping staff develop an allegiance to a new set of shared values, goals and ways of working.

To reflect the ethos of the new organisation, the brand will combine the strength of a unified sense of purpose and direction with a renewed emphasis on localities – helping communities to better connect with the authority which serves them.

The central strategic proposition for the new brand draws together the key principles upon which a new unitary authority for the whole county would be based:

- Clear sighted strategic leadership for the whole county
- A single strong voice speaking on behalf of the county

- A single local authority clearly accountable for the services it provides
- A new sense of unity and togetherness across all parts of local government – and with partners
- An authority which is accessible to the citizen
- A commitment to working closely with communities to make a difference.

These principles are encapsulated in a new core purpose:

“One council, One vision, One voice.”

The brand strategy will be to create a strong clearly identifiable parent brand for a single council with the flexibility to be adapted to local circumstances. The parent brand will appear on every publication and at every point of service delivery. On services delivered across locality boundaries it will be the sole element of the brand. The locality element will be present on those services delivered in restricted localities. The locality element will be based on the locality with which people identify – i.e. their town or parish – not any area management structure the new council might include. It is likely this will be based on the twenty or so key service points. A third tier of the corporate identity may be the service being delivered to the public. Based on the issues which matter most to the public the hierarchy of the branding elements for local services will be locality/service/authority. Where services are delivered across a range of localities the service and authority may be the only elements present.

To emphasise the fact that this is a completely new authority - not an enhanced county council - it will not incorporate elements of the existing county council corporate identity – nor any of the districts identities. It will be a new organisation with a new public image and corporate culture.

Roll out of the new brand will begin as soon as a new authority is established. Any lingering hangover of branding from previous structures will further confuse the public, and would discourage staff from forming a new allegiance with the new organisation.

However the roll out could be phased – with the front office of key buildings and service centres tackled within the first three months. Fleet, plant, back offices and lesser buildings could be tackled in the following nine months. Transitional work on re-branding should be scheduled to begin during the shadow period of the authority – with a view to phase one being in place from day one of business.

## 5.4 Senior officer structures

### Staffing Principles

The highly devolved political management arrangements proposed by Cumbria Council will require transformation of the officer management arrangements.

The Council will seek to establish the characteristics of a world class organisation:

- Visionary and challenging strategic leadership
- Focus on customer satisfaction
- High performance work systems and an emphasis on employee development and engagement
- Clearly designed and well managed processes for service delivery
- Strong financial and performance management.

The new council management will adopt an integrated approach to local service delivery. Clear responsibility and accountability will be established at each level and the intention will be to develop a management approach with two dimensions.

Firstly, services will be organised on a thematic basis learning from the national experience in establishing statutory posts of the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Services. These posts have demonstrated the benefits of clear thematic leadership and alignment. Senior Director posts would similarly be established for other policy themes. The precise title and content of the thematic leads and the mix of services will be determined in the next stage of the implementation process. The location of the Headquarters will be the subject of further discussion and consideration. Operational staff will be located at the most practical and sensible location for each service and will be co-located and integrated

wherever possible with colleagues from partner organisations.

Secondly, each thematic service area will be integrated and coordinated at the area level through a matrix management arrangement. Leadership of the integration of services and the place shaping role at area level will be undertaken by four new posts of Area Manager. These posts will lead the work on devolvement and integration and will directly manage and integrate all staff at the area level.

It will be important for the new Council to have at its heart the principle of organisational development in which the authority will grow and develop its staff and as noted in the previous section on Human Resource Transition, the Cultural Change Agenda, will be vital and the Council will seek to set new benchmark standards as a model employer.

## 5.5 Putting in place the capacity to support the community model

The model for Community Boards demands a step change in community engagement and support for the frontline councillor and from frontline staff working across the range of council services. This needs a coherent approach to community learning, and flexibility of delivery within clear organisational goals. To improve working in this way requires four things:

- consistent local performance management systems
- increased community level collaboration across the public sector
- better supported frontline councillors
- improved engagement with communities.

### Support for the frontline councillor and Community Boards

To lead this work and support councillors and Community Boards, we envisage a core of local development staff, managed on an area basis.

The County and Districts already have a number of community based staff supporting local partnerships. Some, such as Neighbourhood Development Workers, work for the County Council and already provide member support, community development and grants management, and community engagement through neighbourhood forums. Others work in the Voluntary and Community Sector, for local partnerships such as Market Town Initiatives and local regeneration partnerships, and within delivery organisations such as community empowerment networks. Yet others work in Local Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships secretariats and in the district councils. Our intention is to rationalise this disparate offer, getting much better value for money.

Community Boards will provide the focus for much of community development work. This will now be more clearly organised on four areas of activity: member support, local partnership development, neighbourhood management and community engagement. This is a demanding skill mix. We envisage the new Council building on the current collaboration with University of Cumbria to deliver appropriate learning and development for these key staff.

In view of the significant and sustained development role required of Community Boards, the Council's bid includes some resource dedicated to deploying community support to members.

The new Council will build on established arrangements, to ensure that service managers from different areas of work are effectively coordinated. The four area managers will focus on:

- working with strategic partners, to better align local service delivery to secure improved outcomes in the main themes of the LAA
- managing the local community support resource
- managing the development of Community Boards
- effective management of the Area Committees business.

## Performance and information management systems

The new Council will develop processes to ensure each member has detailed neighbourhood performance and needs information. The LAA provides a useful framework for development, in collaboration with the new PCT and Cumbria Police's CuPs team. Cumbria Council will use its efficiencies of scale to make the necessary short term investments and leadership in such an information hub.

## 5.6 Building one council around the customer

At present all seven local authorities have their own contact arrangements with the public. The Connected Cumbria Partnership of the seven local authorities has improved two tier working through the development of an information 'hub' which allows the user to contact their Council anywhere in Cumbria. However, this is a pragmatic way of allowing some joining-up within a framework where the districts and county still have their own individual approaches.

To meet the challenge set by Sir David Varney's 'Transformational Governance' report, local government in Cumbria requires greater coordination of information around the needs of the citizen. This will unlock potential for opportunities like a change of circumstance service, helping people negotiate through major events like birth, address change and bereavement.

Contact in Cumbria Council will be tailored to meet customer needs:

- Over 75% of customers want to talk to us by telephone. We will develop an enhanced telephone contact centre for all local government services (and links to police, health, etc.). This would be built on a single Customer Relationship Management database and provide significant improvements in service (for example, not having to phone different authorities for different queries) and significant savings (one rather than seven)

- A significant number of people still prefer face to face contact. This is especially true for older customers and so is very important for Cumbria given its ageing population. The new Council will establish one-stop contact points in each of the 28 key service centres in Cumbria. These will be of significant size in the six main towns and city centres (Carlisle, Barrow, Workington, Whitehaven, Penrith and Kendal). The others will be linked around the most appropriate facility in the community (e.g. libraries or the extended schools). Again they will provide access to all local Government services (and many other public services in due course)
- Many people, especially children and young people, are increasingly utilising new technology to contact Councils. Despite the development of the 'hub', users can still be confused by the number of web sites and lack of consistency in lay-out, terminology, etc. The new Council would establish one simple, clear web site with interactive access for on-line bookings, applications, payments, etc. It will also provide the capacity, missing in many districts, to develop access through text messaging, IDTV, kiosks, etc
- In a largely rural county like Cumbria, access to services can be problematic, so the new Council will ensure mobile and outreach work. This will use, for example, mobile library vans and information links, closer working with parish councils to utilise parish halls and community centres, the 'pub is the hub' approach and commercial shops – using the existing successful 'library links' model.

Bringing all contact together will help the Council to know all users better, learning how they use services and their expectations of service delivery, to better meet their needs. It will move from making users fit into the services to delivering services with and around the expectations of all users and citizens.

At a strategic level, the case for developing these initiatives is compelling, not least because they can deliver against many of the Gershon efficiency objectives. Cumbria County Council has already embarked on a wide-ranging programme that will

eventually contain a mix of service capabilities. These will include multi-service front office services, some of which will be operated out of contact centres, and one-stop-shops using facilities such as libraries to encourage a more proactive citizen relationship.

Cumbria County Council is implementing a class-leading Customer Relationship Management application (Northgate) that is already extensively used at a number of high performing County Councils (Derbyshire and Somerset for example). The opportunity to engage in a wide ranging business process improvement programme, employing best-practice process used in other Councils is strong.

Some Cumbria districts including: Barrow, Allerdale, and South Lakeland also use the Northgate application. A new Council can capitalise on the developments made by all parties and integration of services delivered with the CRM system will be relatively straightforward.

It is obviously cheaper to use this application once for one authority rather than many separate times. Support costs and service space can also be reduced.

There is an opportunity to achieve rapid early wins during the early phases of transition. This will provide immediate and highly visible evidence to both citizens and members that the new Council service can deliver on its promise in a coherent and consistent manner. This will include:

- Consistent level of Customer Service delivered to customers
- Customer focused staff
- High percentage of customer queries resolved first time with a single telephone call
- Efficiency saving from services delivered by multi-skilled staff
- Golden number – a customer friendly single point of contact to have all "council" questions answered

- Economies of scale, as each district does not necessarily have to have its own customer service function
- Multiple Customer Service channels making it easy for the citizen to get the information they want, when they want
- More rapid delivery and tracking the progress of services.
- Revenues collection and benefits administration
- ICT support and consultancy
- Elections management and electoral registration.

The aim of re-engineering back office functions will be to reduce time and effort on non added value transaction processing activities. The process will also help forge organisational and culture change by integrating systems and establishing new ways of working.

## 5.7 Creating a single shared back office

Creating shared back office functions across the new authority is central to realising efficiency savings. Remodelling is an essential part of delivering against the Lyons and Gershon focus on cost and efficiency.

There is clearly an opportunity to rationalise services especially in key areas such as Human Resources and Finance. The creation of a single council enables the creation and embedding of greater consistency in standards, solutions and use of technology across all back office systems.

The new council will wish to share back office services with health, police and other partners where possible. Remodelling back office functions will also help the new authority free up time and resources to focus on front-line service delivery

Services that will be considered for inclusion in a remodelled back office are:

- Customer contact management
- HR/Payroll
- Financial Services
- Procurement
- Clerical admin support including electronic post room
- Graphic design, advertising, reprographics, print and fulfilment
- Licensing – decriminalised parking, permits etc.

Achieving the necessary transformational change will require dedicated resources in an independent unit. The main focus will be on standardised high volume transactional processes, operated by a flat organisation structure: which provides flexibility, more job variety and staff satisfaction. Possible solutions might include working with partners at a local, regional or national level.

A phased approach will be developed initially linking existing 'county council silo and district' activities before moving to virtual integrated service centres. The intention is to locate key functions such as revenues and benefits, payroll, and procurement across the county in a number of centres of excellence to share employment opportunities.

## 5.8 Integration of ICT

ICT across Cumbria Councils has developed piecemeal. A unitary Cumbria provides the opportunity to create a strategy that identifies common services and assesses the scope for standardising ICT across the new council. A wholesale strategic review of systems is considered essential for re-shaping and developing transformational change.

The scope for realising significant efficiency and cost reduction measures in this area is likely to be very considerable. District Councils will have established similar sets of systems, software applications, support services and service uses. There will be a high level of system standardisation over a transition period of five years, straddling the creation of a unitary Cumbria.

Such an approach should drastically cut down the cost of duplicate support contracts, software licence renewals and levels of complexity around supporting multiple systems, most of which will be presently doing a similar job. A strategy of progressive system standardisation will also provide further efficiency savings across the operating departments of the new Council with standardisation of processes, training and commonality of information provision. Standardisation will create the opportunity to lever increased purchasing power for the procurement of licences and system support requirements.

Whilst efficiency and rationalisation will be pursued to drive down costs, it is recognised that there are likely to be a number of unique systems at District Council sites that will have to be protected or could provide best standards for the formation of a unified service capability. A full assessment will be carried out to ensure that specialist systems are retained and developed where appropriate.

Cumbria County Council's services were installed some years ago and were never designed to cater for the quantity of data traffic that is now required to service a modern Council operation. The constraints of a weak infrastructure network can be profound and will limit the speed and capacity of services to be delivered, but could over time lead to critical service failures across services.

The County through its strategic ICT partner has commissioned a programme of work to address this issue and is implementing a modern voice and data network that will ensure the future proofing of services across all of its current service areas. The ability to extend this solution across a unitary Cumbria has already been factored into the design specification.

A further strategic ICT asset that Cumbria County Council will have in operation from early 2007 is a class-leading data centre capability comprising 4 linked facilities.

The County's ICT partner has established a new purpose-built data centre capability in Carlisle and other locations in the UK, which will eventually host all of the service critical ICT components and, importantly, provides protection against service failure or flooding by having a full business continuity

capability which would be available for hosting a unitary Cumbria's ICT services and possibly other organisations.

## 5.9 Provision of modern and capable finance system

A central requirement of a new Cumbria Council will be to have a scalable and capable finance system to manage its financial obligations. Cumbria County Council has made significant financial investments through its ICT strategic partner to deliver a new class-leading finance system (Cedar Financials), to replace its legacy FIMS system, by the end of 2007.

This new system guarantees the ability for the County to migrate the six District Councils financial systems into a single entity. This capability would form the foundations for the successful financial governance of a Unitary Council.

The new system is being configured to enable full commitment accounting practices which will ensure that tight fiscal control around budget setting and tracking can be maintained. This will allow the Council to exercise a level of control around cash planning that is currently not possible. It is unlikely that any of the six District Councils could exercise such control with their current systems that are designed, by comparison to the County Council, as small scale systems. It is envisaged that under a new unitary structure there will be a standardisation of fiscal planning and execution controls and that will result in the need for the migration of data onto a single scalable platform.

Further, the system will provide the new council with a fully integrated electronic procurement capability, currently being developed in parallel with the rollout of the core financial system, that will provide the new council with a modern and capable solution to operate full end-to-end processing of the procurement of goods and services.

Efficiency gains are expected and a single procurement process has the advantage of increased buyer power.

The technology solution will, in itself, not deliver efficiency gains. However, the opportunity to

optimise the processes, management information, financial and decision making controls that this system provides can be used to drive transformational change across an increasingly complex organisation.

The principal benefits that the new finance system will provide include:

- Modernisation
- Improved financial controls
- Improved budgetary control
- Direct and Indirect savings
- Scope for enhancing strategic partnerships
- Improved accountable body function.

## 5.10 Rationalisation of property assets:

The future use of property assets in Cumbria will take into account the existing building stock. But, more importantly, it needs to reflect the way Cumbria Council will be organised.

Determining factors will be the physical presence required at each of the Centre, Area and Locality.

The Council will maximise use of property from the current six District Councils and County Council. Existing Town Halls, Headquarters and offices in Carlisle, Workington, Whitehaven, Penrith, Kendal and Barrow will be reviewed for their continued use and expansion as centres of council activity to make sure Cumbria Council delivers for the whole county.

Existing council outlets in key service centres and localities will be reviewed to determine the most suitable premises in each location to act as the focal point for public contact. Much better use of flexible working, home working and hot desking will be explored in line with national trends.

Making better use of the considerable assets that would be available to a unitary council is seen as a key driver. Using the skills of our Strategic partner Capita, the County Council has already begun a review of property assets in partnership with Carlisle City Council.

This Strategic Review will bring together a number of factors including:

- Service Provision Strategy – directorate service plans and staff re-training
- External Factors – legal, political, national and regional priorities
- User Strategy – accessibility, customer needs, marketing
- Property rationalisation – space utilisation, storage, performance indicators
- IT Transformation – mobile working, video conferencing, CRM
- Shared Service Opportunities – common accommodation strategy.

A deliverable action plan will be developed which will include:

- a common consistent accommodation strategy and
- the production of an outline business case identifying specific potential benefits of better use of assets including potential capital and revenue savings and a number of “quick win” projects to realise early benefits.

The initial work will specifically look at a joint delivery model for Carlisle, whilst carrying out a full review of the portfolios of assets. This will have regard to the location and proximity of council, and potentially other public sector partners, assets through the property data. The final outline business case will provide options for improvement and/or rationalisation across the whole of the county.

The review will include an examination of the facilities management arrangements that support that portfolio. The property rationalisation exercise itself will identify some facilities management savings but further opportunities will be considered through management of the facilities management service and alternative procurement techniques.

However, until this work is complete and the scale of opportunity identified, we have not included any savings around the property portfolio within the financial model.



# Chapter Six

## A broad cross section of stakeholder support

### 6.1 Wide ranging support

Our proposals for Cumbria Council have already secured a broad cross-section of support from key partners representing a wide range of public, private and voluntary sectors in Cumbria. Key partners have been engaged throughout development of the bid to ensure it reflects their expectations, ambitions and concerns and is committed to continuing this dialogue as the bid is further refined and consulted on before July 2007.

Those who are already backing Cumbria Council at this early stage represent a comprehensive mix of the training, business and regeneration sector; community and third sector organisations as well as other key public sector partners. Critically the mix of organisations also reflects a balance of scale and remit, with supporters including a diverse range of countywide bodies and leading regional decision makers.

Key messages of support from these organisations are set out in summary below, with the full text set out in Appendix D. In many cases, this support comes with specific recommendations on how to improve our model and offers to help work with the council and other partners to design the best way forward for a new way of working. In a few cases, the support is strongly in favour of the principle of unitary local government, rather than for a particular model.

We are committed to listening hard to all these messages and working collectively to design a new council which can achieve all the expectations which stakeholders have identified to be unlocked by a radical new approach.

#### Key stakeholder views

"If implemented, the current proposal will improve partnership working in Cumbria, support the delivery of consistently high quality services and help remove inefficiency. We are particularly keen

to explore the range of benefits of joint working in terms of shared appointments and co-locations"

**Maggie Chadwick (Chair) and Sue Page (Chief Executive)**  
– **Cumbria PCT**

"My Trust's consistent support has been for structures which take a county perspective and avoid fragmentation ... I confirm our support for local government arrangements which are configured on the same boundary arrangements for Cumbria County Council"

**Stephen Dalton, Chief Executive**  
– **Cumbria Partnership NHS Trust**

"Voluntary Action Cumbria (the County Rural Community Council) can see considerable advantages in partnership working and better use of resources from having a unitary authority in Cumbria. VAC are very supportive of the approach of having a new authority for the County and want to make clear the view that a fresh start may be the only way to move forward to an effective unitary authority"

**Lorraine Smyth on behalf of VAC Trustees**

"A single interface in place of the existing seven authorities can only improve the relationships between the two major components of life in Cumbria (voluntary and community sector and local government). I believe the unitary council can do much, as you say in your paper, to foster and structure relationships with the voluntary and community sector; but actually simplifying and codifying those relationships...

... the circumstances are crying out for a radical change on the lines of "One Council, One Vision, One Voice, and I would fully support such a change"

**Sir Graham Melmoth,**  
**Chair National Council for Voluntary Organisations**

"The (Cumbria) Association (of Local Councils) believes that the best prospect of achieving high quality local government in Cumbria lies in the replacement of the current two tier local government structure with one or more unitary authorities"

**CALC Interim Paper – 4 December 2006**

“Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Industry is keen to support your bid ... we believe that the Cumbrian economy has seriously suffered through confusion, political infighting and confusing layers of bureaucracy.

We believe that a single Cumbrian authority provides a tremendous opportunity to work in partnership with the private sector and will contribute to future integration and development of the Cumbrian economy. It is only by working together, as a single county with simple layers of governance, can we overcome the significant challenges and grasp the opportunities that face Cumbria in the future.”

**Rob Johnston,**  
*Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Industry*

“Unitary local government ... simplifies decision making structures for the business community and local communities ... provides the opportunity for greater cohesive community leadership and a greater focus on ‘place making’”

**Bryan Gray,**  
*Chairman, North West Development Agency*

“The Board, with majority support, voted in favour of the concept of a Unitary Authority for Cumbria ... Real progress and strategic coherence could be achieved with a Unitary Authority”

**Ian Stephens,**  
*Cumbria Tourism, a private sector company representing over 2,300 business and organisations*

“The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) judges that there are significant advantages to be gained by having a single tier of local government in the county and strongly supports the County Council’s proposals. The impact of this change of the economic performance of Cumbria are potentially transformational”

**Ruth Bullen**  
– *Director – Cumbria Learning and Skills Council*

“Amey fully supports the case for a unitary Cumbria ... as the most practicable way of improving the delivery of service to Cumbria’s communities and businesses. Most importantly it will enable the provision of a fully seamless approach to the specification and delivery of highways and related services to all the County’s residents and businesses”

**Nick Sharman,**  
*Amey Board member for Local Government*

## 6.2 Public Attitudes

### Community identity

We know from previous research that people in Cumbria have a strong affinity with their own town and village and with the county area.

The Cumbrian Attitude Survey (2004) found that 61% of respondents felt a sense of belonging to their county and 65% to their own neighbourhood or village. Fewer people felt an affinity to areas of governance like county council or district council areas – with which only 48% felt any sense of belonging. These findings confirmed similar results from earlier research by MORI on behalf of the Boundary Commission (February 2004). This showed 45% of people strongly identifying with Cumbria as an area as opposed to 23% strongly identifying with their district area.

This pattern was not entirely universal - but only in the Barrow area did respondents feel a stronger sense of belonging to their district than to their county area.

Our proposal is based on the fundamental principle that services and democratic decision making are brought as close as possible to the communities that are most meaningful to people - within an overarching framework which brings economies of scale – but with which people can readily identify.

### Attitudes to local councils and services

To inform the development of our proposals we have used qualitative focus groups to tease out the strands of public understanding and attitudes towards local government. We have not fallen into the trap of conducting flawed quantitative surveys about public attitudes towards new local governance arrangements before they have been fully developed or communicated to local people.

Four focus groups were run by independent research group CN Research in the north, south, east and west of the county. The research provide many helpful insights which have been used to shape our bid.



Source: *Cumbria Attitudes Survey (2004)*, Base = 1230

In all groups there was considerable confusion about which authority was responsible for providing key services. This was compounded by dissatisfaction with communication about services and a sense that the existing pattern of service delivery is too complicated. One participant commented: "Not even the people who work for them know how it works, or who does what". Another added: "Everyone passes the buck so you don't know who to speak with to get satisfaction".

When asked to comment on the quality of local services participants identify a range of strengths and weaknesses - but common themes appear to be around the responsiveness of services to the needs of individuals or communities. People are most satisfied when they can contact the council easily to raise an issue – and action follows on swiftly. They are most frustrated when issues are raised and authorities do not respond or difficult to contact.

Clarity of responsibilities, consistency of service delivery, and clear ownership of customer service, are obviously important to local people and are integral to our proposals.

### Attitudes to unitary and two-tier governance

Researchers explained the differences between two-tier and unitary governance before seeking participants views on the pros and cons of each option.

The overwhelming response from participants was that they didn't much care how local authorities are structured – provided they deliver services effectively. As one respondent put it: "I have no problem about it getting bigger, as long as it works right".

Participants were quick to identify the potential efficiencies in a unitary approach through having fewer councillors and senior officers – but most placed greater emphasis on maintaining quality of service: "All we have seen about a new authority is about saving money; we want to see services maintained."

The main benefit was seen as clear accountability and "less passing the buck" along with having "One point or place of contact so that it is easier to contact the right person".

People also recognised the likelihood that a single unitary could have a stronger and more influential

voice – one participant said: “Cumbria is on a downward economic cycle at the moment and we find it difficult to attract inward investment, perhaps a unitary authority might be better at getting more investment for the county”.

In general, the potential advantages of a well implemented change to unitary were recognised and understood. “If the change was made sensibly then it would make sense to have one unitary authority” said one respondent – whilst another with direct experience of such change added: “Where I used to live they joined two councils together to make a unitary authority and to save money. They did reinvest that money into the area to improve service. It was a good thing.”

However people also recognised the risks in a unitary approach. The biggest concern was around the loss of local knowledge, democratic representation, and a lack of responsiveness to local issues. A range of strong views were expressed, and we have used these to inform our approach.

“They don’t value us the same as the city (Carlisle)”

“There may be economies to be made through fewer councillors and expenses – but then how clearly are wards represented?”

“My fear is that we as an area will lose out to some of the other areas such as Carlisle, Allerdale and Copeland”.

“Wherever it was based it is not central, small areas are better for local people”

There is also an automatic assumption that any new authority would centralise more power and decision making in an administrative centre in Carlisle, leading to other areas losing out: “The headquarters will undoubtedly be based in Carlisle, where is the money going to go, not the local community”.

And there were also worries that big organisations are not automatically better - exacerbating problems of poor communication and inefficiency rather than making them better:.

“With big organisations departments don’t know what others are doing so there is a communication issue”

“The bigger government gets, the worse it gets”

These are significant concerns and we have taken great care to ensure that through our proposal local communities will get far greater access to services and decision making than in the current system. We have also sought to ensure that the new authority has a local footprint which brings accessibility and employment opportunities to the whole county, and that management is robust enough to ensure services improve and failures in communication do not occur.

But people also recognised the weaknesses which dog the existing arrangements for example the lack of communication between tiers and inability to provide joined up customer service:

“In a two tier system there seems to be more opportunity for the officers to pass you onto someone else. It’s never their fault”.

“The complaints system is weak, you get shoved from pillar to post and then they hope you go away”

There is a lack of communication between the two authorities – no one knows what the right hand is doing”.

There is also a view that the current system does not work and the time has come for change: “We have had a two tier system for a long time, it isn’t working in a lot of areas, is it not time for change?”

### Future consultation

All participants in the focus groups agreed that it was important some sort of debate or consultation should take place across the whole of the county before decisions are made. We agree that meaningful debate and consultation on the issues is important. The timescales for preparing a bid have made it difficult to carry out further consultation. We will however, undertake further consultation to help the development of these proposals.





# Appendix A

## Draft job description for all members of a new unitary authority for Cumbria

### All members

1. To deliver the highest standards of service and governance for local people.
2. To contribute actively to decision-making on the Council's policies, plans and budgets, and to continuously review and improve Council services and performance.
3. To work with the Council's partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors and with customers and service users to shape priorities and improve services.
4. To engage with local communities, representing their interests and championing their causes, improving service planning and delivery, and furthering the council's contribution to the quality of life of people in Cumbria by offering community leadership.
5. To maximise the use of the Community Board which covers my electoral division as a means of engaging with local people, town and parish councils and other key partners to ensure effective delivery of services to meet the needs of the local community.
6. To represent the interests of my electoral division as a whole, and deal effectively with constituents' enquiries, complaints and representations.
7. To comply with the Councillors' Code of Conduct and maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics in the way in which I carry out my duties.
8. To ensure that the Council has proper arrangements for the management of its affairs and stewardship of its resources.

9. To act as a 'corporate parent' for children in the care of the authority.

10. To improve my performance as a Councillor:

### Key tasks

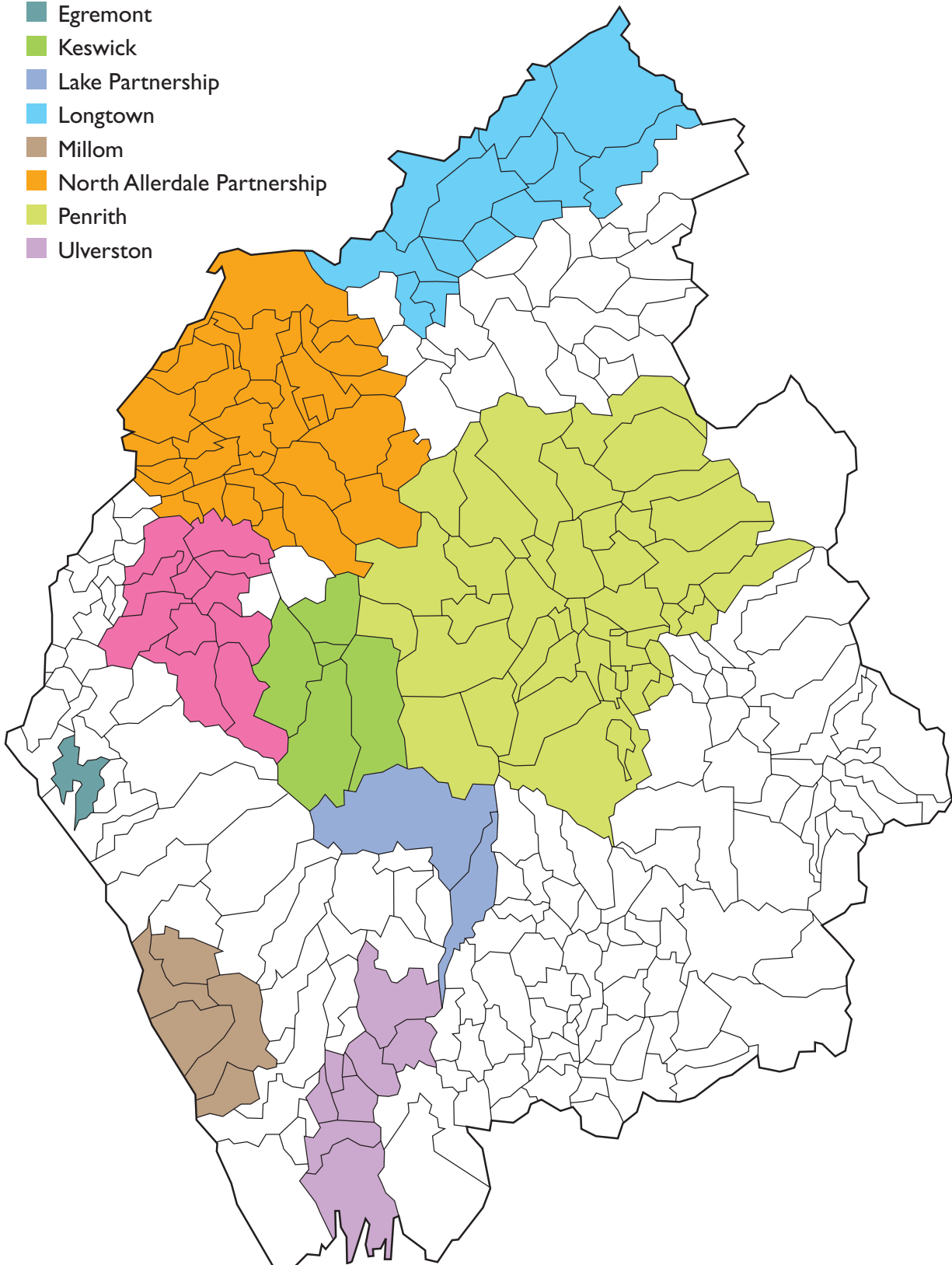
1. To develop the Council's policies, plans and budgets.
2. To show leadership and be personally accountable for making things happen locally, to monitor and review service standards and performance, and to take or secure action where appropriate.
3. To build collaborative working relationships with local partners, including the parish and town councils, the primary care trust, voluntary organisations and community groups, the police and others; to co-ordinate service development and planning, and to improve service integration and delivery.
4. To lead the Council's community planning role locally, and to contribute to the Community Boards community strategy.
5. To actively engage partners, stakeholder groups and local people in issues of concern in my electoral division, and to involve them in the development of solutions.
6. To encourage local communities to engage and participate in meetings and decision-making.
7. To work together with colleagues as part of a team, whether as a member of a Community Board, or Area Committee, as a member of the Executive or assigned committees, including those with responsibilities for advising on policy development and review, overview and scrutiny, performance management, planning and development control, corporate governance and audit, and standards of conduct.

8. To lead by example, in accordance with the highest standards of probity in public life, in all matters relating to the Council's Code of Conduct, related protocols and supporting guidance.
9. To comply with the Constitution, particularly with the rules on decision-making and access to information, and the Councillors' Code of Conduct and all protocols approved by the Council.
10. To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's statutory powers and duties, its services and strategies, and to develop good working relationships with officers.
11. To participate in the activities of any outside body to which I am appointed as a unitary council representative, providing two-way communication between the Authority and the organisation.
12. To be aware of any personal learning and development needs and liaise with members of the relevant political group and Council officers to address such needs.
13. To develop effective working relationships based on mutual respect and co-operation with all officers with whom I may need to deal in the performance of my various roles.
14. To participate in the activities of any political group of which I am a member.

# Appendix B

## Potential community board areas based on existing market town initiative areas

- Cockermouth
- Egremont
- Keswick
- Lake Partnership
- Longtown
- Millom
- North Allerdale Partnership
- Penrith
- Ulverston



### Population estimates for potential community boards

Local Partnerships	District	2003 pop
Brampton	Carlisle	10200
Carlisle	Carlisle	84600
Longtown	Carlisle	7100
Cockermouth	Allerdale	15200
Keswick	Allerdale	7700
Maryport	Allerdale	15100
North Allerdale Partnership	Allerdale	25200
Workington	Allerdale	31300
Alston	Eden	2200
Appleby	Eden	6500
Kirkby Stephen	Eden	6000
Penrith	Eden	36400
Cleator Moor	Copeland	12200
Egremont	Copeland	9500
Millom	Copeland	10100
Seascale	Copeland	5500
Whitehaven	Copeland	32200
Grange	South Lakeland	10000
Kendal	South Lakeland	37300
Kirkby Lonsdale	South Lakeland	2700
Lakes & Windermere	South Lakeland	14200
Milnthorpe	South Lakeland	12000
Sedbergh	South Lakeland	3600
Ulverston	South Lakeland	20500
Barrow	Barrow	57600
Dalton	Barrow	13000

# Appendix C

## What is Cumbria like? Our context

### History of Cumbria

The county of Cumbria was created in 1974. It was a combination of the area of the administrative counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, the Cumberland county borough of Carlisle, along with the North Lonsdale or Furness part of Lancashire (including the county borough of Barrow-in-Furness), and from the West Riding of Yorkshire, the Sedbergh Rural District. The name “Cumbria” has been used for the region for centuries and derives from its name in the Cumbric language.

### Geography

Cumbria is a county in the North West region of England. It is home to the Lake District National Park, considered one of the most beautiful areas of the UK. The area has provided inspiration for generations of British and foreign artists, writers and musicians.

The county is the second largest area in England (at 676,715 ha) and accounts for almost half (48%) of the North West region. All land in England that is over 3,000 feet is in Cumbria, the highest point being Scafell Pike at 978 m (3209 ft), while parts of Hadrian's Wall can be found in the northernmost reaches of the county.

Cumbria shares a border with Northumberland, County Durham, North Yorkshire and Lancashire in England. In addition the county borders Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders. The county boundary is also largely defined by its coastline, along the Irish Sea to Morecambe Bay in the west, and the Solway Firth to the north.

The settlement pattern in the county is distinct and has been dictated principally by its unique topography. The large upland area of fells and mountains in the centre constrain cross-county communication and the majority of settlements are located on the periphery of the county. Over 50% of

the residents of the county live in areas defined by DEFRA as rural, with 22% living in sparse rural areas. This is the highest proportion in England.

The two main towns in Cumbria are situated at opposite ends of the county with Barrow in the south west and Carlisle in the north east. Both settlements have a population of around 70,000. The next largest towns, Kendal in the south east, Whitehaven and Workington, both in the west, have populations of less than 30,000. Penrith is the largest town in the east of the county with a population of 15,000.

### Population

In 2005 Cumbria's resident population stood at 498,900, an increase of 3.7% since 1981. Against this backdrop of overall slow growth the 0-29 age group declined by 17.7%, the 60+ age group grew by 18.1% and the 75+ age group by 47.2%.

The drivers of these changes differ across the county. The decline in young people is fastest in the west of the county with growth in older adults occurring most rapidly in the south and east. These changes are forecasted to continue into the future with potentially dramatic implications on the structure of the resident population. In 2005 the working-age population accounted for 64.5% of all residents. By 2029 this proportion is forecasted to fall to 57.5%.

### Economic picture

The Cumbrian economic picture is one of contrasts. Within its boundaries, there are some local areas that are amongst the most deprived in the UK alongside others where incomes are above average. Some places exhibit high levels of unemployment while others have strikingly low numbers of unemployed. The overall picture is, however, of a county that is now the worst performing sub-region of the UK in terms of GVA.

There are 24 specific localities that are in the ten percent most deprived areas and within that category 7 areas are in the worst 3% across the whole of England and Wales. Deprivation is also a feature of rural areas but, with the exception of poor access to services and transport difficulties, the scale of the problem is often masked by statistical averages. Rural deprivation tends to focus at the level of individual households that depend on low wage employment and experience long hours associated with multi-jobbing. Affordability of housing is also a factor in the east of the county and in other rural areas, affecting the ability to attract and retain workers.

Job losses and closures have affected the manufacturing sector in particular where levels of GVA per worker are relatively high. There has been employment growth in other activities between 1999 and 2003 but the most prominent growth has occurred in retailing, hotels, restaurants and public sector services, all falling within low GVA sectors. The succession of closures of businesses in the manufacturing sector, however, means that industrial employment in West Cumbria and Furness is even more dependent on the nuclear sector than five years ago and employment in financial and business services remains under-represented.

In Carlisle recent large job losses in manufacturing and an inability to attract higher value employment have exposed the vulnerability of what had been considered previously to be a relatively robust local economy. In short, there has been insufficient strength elsewhere in the economy to compensate for the continued losses in manufacturing industry and hence the continuing and dramatic decline in the relative wealth.

In relation to skills, Cumbria has lower levels of skills and qualifications at NVQ levels 3 and 4 compared to national averages. Recent surveys also continue to show the concerns of employers about basic skill levels in the labour market and difficulties in recruiting staff in specialist fields such as engineering and other appropriate technical qualifications.

In terms of infrastructure, Cumbria experiences disadvantages due to remoteness from other centres of population and poor connectivity in transport infrastructure. This means that

communities in Cumbria do not benefit from proximity to larger urban centres in the North of England that could otherwise provide alternative sources of employment, increasing the reliance on local employers.

Cumbrian partners also need to consider a future where the second largest employer in the county – the nuclear industry (of which Cumbria is hub for the UK) is undergoing major job losses and a shift in emphasis. Potentially 8,000 high value jobs at Sellafield will disappear over the next 10 years – almost double the job losses resulting from the Rover car plant closure which attracted considerably more national attention. Partners are working together to set out an aspirational, but achievable vision for the future of the area, with a concrete action plan for change.

It is within this climate that Cumbrian partners must operate to reverse the negative trends of recent years and secure sustainable economic growth that will provide a more prosperous future for all. Much work has already been undertaken with a number of achievements delivered through partnership working. A new Unitary Authority would be able to operate effectively with the wide range of County-wide organisations, such as Cumbria Vision, to deliver the shared economic regeneration agenda.

# Appendix D

## Letters of support for a unitary authority

PO Box 282  
 Carlisle  
 CA2 6WZ  
[info@awaz.info](mailto:info@awaz.info)  
[www.AWAZ.info](http://www.AWAZ.info)  
 07971 987277 (Response within 72 hours)



Cumbrian  
**AWAZ**  
 BME Forum  
 The VOICE and Social Network of the  
 BME Community in Cumbria

19 January 2007

Peter Stybelski  
 Chief Executive  
 Cumbria County Council  
 The Courts  
 Carlisle

Dear Peter,

AWAZ (Cumbria) would like to support in principal the County Council's proposed bid for Unitary Council. AWAZ have attend your presentation, reviewed the draft proposal and discussed this at its meeting on the 10 of January.

In supporting the proposal in principal AWAZ would like to raise a number of areas for further consideration and would like the County Council to consider, these are:

- Undertake a race equality impact assessment of the proposal on the BME communities across Cumbria.
- That the relationship with the BME VCS is sustained and developed on along term basis in the development of this proposal.
- That BME and race implications are considered at all stages of the implementation.
- That appropriate scrutiny from a race and BME perspective is built into the implementation process and beyond
- That the issues for very small and isolated BME communities in rural areas are not ignored, and that in the delivery of services (directed or contracted), the rural premium is recognised in these isolated and vulnerable communities.

Having expressed concerns above, we also find that a unitary council for Cumbria would provide the following benefits:

- Remove barriers to BME organisations (e.g. AWAZ) - i.e. having to work with 7 separate authorities and negotiate individual agreement and several SLA's to fund core strategic work. One council would allow us to have a stronger focus to ensure the community across Cumbria is served equally and effectively.

- Strengthen match funding for AWAZ to get bids from the Lottery etc.
- Strengthens AWAZ's ambition to continue to develop as a single Cumbria wide BME forum that co-ordinates local networks.
- Allows dispersed groups such as BME communities to have a stronger voice in consultation, community engagement and cultural activity.
- Allows for a joined up approach to Gypsy Traveller issues, i.e. managing unauthorised encampments, working with people who move between parts of the county etc.
- Allows for a strategic and stronger role in the delivery of Race Equality and wider equality work across Cumbria, This is most important in the current climate of increased racism and islamaphobia and the need for a strong and consistent approach to address sensitive issues which at present are either fragmented or not considered by some authorities.

AWAZ (Cumbria) looks forward to working in equal partnership with the County Council and other stakeholders in this exciting period for Cumbria and ensuring that the BME communities have access to services and their voice in these important developments and implementation is built into the process.

Yours sincerely

pp



Peter Foley MBE (Chair)

AWAZ (Cumbria)

CC: Joel Rasbash - Equality Officer



Mr Peter Stybelski  
Chief Executive  
Cumbria County Council  
The Courts  
English Street  
Carlisle  
CA3 8NA



**Bryan Gray MBE, DL**  
Chairman

BG/CD  
21 December 2006

*2006/12/21*

#### **Local Government White Paper**

Thank you for your letter of 19 December regarding the opportunities presented within the White Paper.

The Agency's Board has discussed the issue of local government reform and supports the principle of unitary local government. The reasons for this are the economic focus and drive such an arrangement would produce and also it simplifies decision making structures for the business community and local communities. Unitary structures also provide the opportunity for greater cohesive community leadership and a greater focus on "place making" which is a critical theme within the White Paper.

We look forward to being part of the consultant which will occur if government support your initial proposals.

Yours sincerely

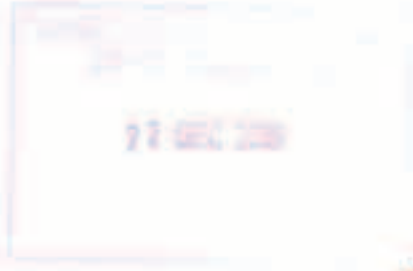
*Bryan*

**Bryan M Gray**  
Chairman

Northwest Regional Development Agency  
Renaissance House  
PO Box 37, Centre Park  
Warrington, WA1 1XB

Telephone: +44 (0)1925 400100  
Fax: +44 (0)1925 400400  
E-mail: [information@nwda.co.uk](mailto:information@nwda.co.uk)  
[www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

INVESTING IN  
**englandsnorthwest**

**Cumbria Partnership**   
NHS Trust

The Carleton Clinic  
Cumwhinton Drive  
CARLISLE  
CA1 3SX  
Tel No: (01228) 60 2000

Direct Line: (01228) 60 2378  
Fax No: (01228) 60 2384

Email: [Yvonne.Salkeld@cumbria.nhs.uk](mailto:Yvonne.Salkeld@cumbria.nhs.uk)

Our ref: / YS

13 December 2006

Mr P Stybelski  
Chief Executive  
Cumbria County Council  
The Courts  
CARLISLE  
CA3 8NA

Dear Peter

I am aware of the current debate in respect of the future for Local Government arrangements in Cumbria. My Trust's consistent support has been for structures which take a county perspective and avoid fragmentation. In a previous consultation linked to potential for emerging Regional Government my Board was clear in its expressed support for the maintenance of a Cumbria county configuration.

In essence, I write to confirm our support for Local Government arrangements which are configured on the same boundary arrangements as Cumbria County Council

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Dalton  
Chief Executive

c.c. Bryan Betterton, Chair  
Mike Ash, Non Executive Director

## Amey's Comments on the Case for a Unitary Authority for Cumbria

### Background

Amey has worked as a strategic partner for the Council since April 2005, providing highways maintenance and related services for the authority's 7700 km of roads. It employs some 500 people and is responsible for some £30m a year of the Council's spending. It works in close partnership with both the Council and with the Council's other strategic partners in delivering the services for which it is responsible.

Amey also has long experience of working in the County. For example it is currently also highways service provider to the Highways Agency for the area.

### Cumbria's Case for Unitary Status

Amey fully supports the case for a unitary Cumbria. There are three key reasons for its view.

First, the underlying **economic and service delivery arguments** for a joined up approach to the governance and delivery of local transport services are particularly strong. This follows from the nature of the service itself, notably the importance of economies of scale in investment in capital equipment and systems. However there is a further argument which applies with particular force to Cumbria's transport sector: the county's physically dispersed settlement patterns create especially high costs for small scale operations.

Second, our **experience of working with the Council** in delivering highways and related services has been very positive. The Council has been proactive in its approach to partnership working with its service providers. Furthermore it has actively developed a local and neighbourhood level dimension to the delivery of highways and other services.

Third, the wider arguments for a unitary approach, notably a strong interaction between **service delivery and the environmental and economic development** agendas have a particularly important in considering the county's transport infrastructure. A fragmented approach to these key issues will mean economic and environmental policies will not make their full and proper impact on type and form transport infrastructure investment.

### Partnership Working

Amey is strongly convinced that close partnership based working relationships are an essential basis for delivery of customer led public services. A joined up approach to the specification, inspection, design and maintenance of assets and the delivery of service is the only way that the needs of the public as individuals and members of their community can be recognised and delivered. As important, it is only in this way that services can be made fully accountable to local people.

Cumbria has developed mechanisms at both strategic and local level to enable this joined up approach to work. Moreover it has ensured there is a 'cultural' commitment by staff in all the organisations to the approach. This framework allows the highways and related services to ensure important economies of scale are delivered (including the interface

with the Council's economic development and environmental strategies) while remaining sensitive and accountable to localities through local performance reporting.

In our view this framework could be readily extended to take in the transport responsibilities of the District Councils without losing the understanding and ability to respond to local and neighbourhood issues.

### Improvements in service

Cumbria's approach has had very beneficial effects on the service. Cumbria Highways with its private sector providers has been able to make very substantial investments in both capital plant and depots. This is being extended to new interactive systems that will enable customers to raise issues and view performance reports at county and local level. We fully expect this positive approach to innovation will be carried forward under the Cumbria Highways partnership.

### Governance

The partnership approach, which links the Council to its strategic service providers, has been integrated with the mechanisms for political accountability at both strategic and local levels. As a partner organisation within Cumbria Highways we are actively involved with the Cabinet Member and with local councillors in the Area committees. Taken together this governance framework provides for the integration of management effectiveness and political accountability in a way that can be readily extended to cover the relevant district council services.

### Conclusion

Amey support the unitary approach as the most practicable way of improving the delivery of service to Cumbria's communities and businesses in the most economical way possible.

Most importantly it will enable the provision of a fully seamless approach to the specification and delivery of highways and related services to all the County's residents and businesses.

In summary we believe that by grounding this key service in localities and by delivering across the county, Cumbria's transport services will be able both support the long term development of the County and meet the needs of the public as individuals and communities.



15<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Peter Stybelski  
Chief Executive  
Cumbria County Council  
The Courts  
English Street  
Carlisle  
CA3 8NA

Dear Peter,

### Unitary Status for Cumbria

I am writing to offer VAC's qualified support for a Unitary Status bid for Cumbria. The Trustees of VAC have considered the bid and on the whole see the value of unitary status in Cumbria for the people and communities that we work with. VAC can see considerable advantages in partnership working and better use of resources from having a unitary authority in Cumbria. VAC are very supportive of the approach of having a new authority for the County and want to make clear the view that a fresh start may be the only way to move forward to an effective unitary authority.

Areas where we feel there needs to be further development with a broader partnership are around:

A clearer statement and inclusion of the diversity of the County. VAC is advocating more focus on the rural areas and their needs. However it should be possible to identify the bid more closely with Cumbria's unique rural, coastal, industrial heritage, tourist, nuclear and sparse environments.

The economic future of the County is challenged. The bid is not lent credibility by quoting Cumbria Vision as the delivery agent for dealing with the challenges. While we all hope the challenges can be overcome and a bright future be developed, this agency has faced difficulties and has no track record to support the hopes.

Much of the delegation of member roles to the third tier of local Government – The Parish and Town Council's, relies on voluntary commitment. VAC supports the representations made by CALC on the need to consider the burdens this places on these volunteers and the need to support and resource their development.



THE OLD STABLES, REDHILLS, PENRITH, CUMBRIA CA11 0DT

TEL 01768 840927

FAX 01768 242114

E-MAIL [vac@rdial.pges.com](mailto:vac@rdial.pges.com)

WEBSITE [www.volactombria.org.uk](http://www.volactombria.org.uk)

Member of the ACRE network  
Member of North West Rural Communities Council

CHIEF EXECUTIVE KOLES BREKTS

REGISTERED CHARITABLE COMPANY

NUMBER 1042000

- 2 -

VAC has worked with Forums and communities that engage with Forums around the County. While in many areas they are successful and effective, the County cannot be unaware of the challenge that the grants are what draw people to the meetings. While VAC support building the bid on existing structures, this cannot be done without a capacity review and some re thinking of the engagement process with communities at the local level. This is a process we would want to be involved in.

VAC hopes that the Government support a unitary process for Cumbria. Should that be the case, VAC would want to be involved with the partnership taking forward the process. VAC would bring to that Partnership a strong desire for rural equity and consistent, effective community engagement.

Due to the timescales involved with this process I am emailing this response. A hard copy will follow.

Yours sincerely,



**LORRAINE SMYTH**  
Community Team Leader  
For and on behalf of the Trustees of VAC



Letter to Peter Stybelski (for public consumption)

Thank you for your letter of 19 December about the Cumbria response to the White Paper '*Strong and Prosperous Communities*' published in October last year.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) judges that there are significant advantages to be gained by having a single tier of Local Government in the County and strongly supports the County Council's proposals. The impact of this change on the economic performance of Cumbria are potentially transformational.

The details of the arrangements will of course need to be worked up and consulted upon, however in principle the concept is sound.

Ruth Bullen  
Director of Area - Cumbria

Peter Stybelski  
 Chief Executive  
 Cumbria County Council  
 The Courts  
 English Street  
 Carlisle CA3 8NA

15.1.07

Dear Peter

Re: Unitary Status for Cumbria.



I am writing to offer VAC's qualified support for a Unitary Status bid for Cumbria. The Trustees of VAC have considered the bid and on the whole see the value of unitary status in Cumbria for the people and communities that we work with. VAC can see considerable advantages in partnership working and better use of resources from having a unitary authority in Cumbria. VAC are very supportive of the approach of having a new authority for the County and want to make clear the view that a fresh start may be the only way to move forward to an effective unitary authority.

Areas where we feel there needs to be further development with a broader partnership are around:

A clearer statement and inclusion of the diversity of the County. VAC is advocating more focus on the rural areas and their needs. However it should be possible to identify the bid more closely with Cumbria's unique rural, coastal, industrial heritage, tourist, nuclear and sparse environments.

The economic future of the County is challenged. The bid is not lent credibility by quoting Cumbria Vision as the delivery agent for dealing with the challenges. While we all hope the challenges can be overcome and a bright future be developed, this agency has faced difficulties and has no track record to support the hopes.

Much of the delegation of member roles to the third tier of local Government – The Parish and Town Council's, relies on voluntary commitment. VAC supports the representations made by CALC on the need to consider the burdens this places on these volunteers and the need to support and resource their development.

VAC has worked with Forums and communities that engage with Forums around the County. While in many areas they are successful and effective, the County cannot be unaware of the challenge that the grants are what draw people to the meetings. While VAC support building the bid on existing structures, this cannot be done without a capacity review and some re thinking of the engagement process with communities at the local level. This is a process we would want to be involved in.

VAC hopes that the Government support a unitary process for Cumbria. Should that be the case, VAC would want to be involved with the partnership taking forward the process. VAC would bring to that Partnership a strong desire for rural equity and consistent, effective community engagement.

Due to the timescales involved with this process I am emailing this response. A hard copy will follow.

Yours sincerely

*L. Smyth*

**Lorraine Smyth**  
**Community Team Leader**  
**For and on behalf of the Trustees of VAC.**

Voluntary Action Cumbria is the Rural Community Council for Cumbria.  
Our purpose is to work with people and communities to improve the quality of life in rural Cumbria.  
Our vision is communities that are socially, economically and environmentally vibrant  
where the needs of all are considered and planned for.

VAC is a registered Charity No: 1080875 and Company Limited by Guarantee No: 3957858



Telephone 0845 2260040  
Facsimile 0845 2260050

[info@cumbriachamber.co.uk](mailto:info@cumbriachamber.co.uk)  
[www.cumbriachamber.co.uk](http://www.cumbriachamber.co.uk)

RLJ/LF/1122

8 January 2007

Peter Stybelski  
Chief Executive  
Cumbria County Council  
The Courts  
CARLISLE  
CA3 8NA

Dear Peter

Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Industry is keen to support your bid to develop a single unitary authority for Cumbria.

We believe that the Cumbrian economy has seriously suffered through confusion, political infighting and confusing layers of bureaucracy.

As a county-wide organisation we understand the challenges that you face, but believe that a single Cumbrian authority provides a tremendous opportunity to work in partnership with the private sector and will contribute to future integration and development of the Cumbrian economy.

It is only by working together, as a single county with simple layers of governance, can we overcome the significant challenges and grasp the opportunities that face Cumbria in the future.

I wish you luck with your bid and support your plans.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Johnston', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Rob Johnston  
Chief Executive

17 January 2007

Mr P Stybelski  
Chief Executive  
Cumbria County Council  
The Courts  
Carlisle  
CA3 8NA



**Cumbria Tourism**  
At the heart of our water economy

Windermere Road  
Staveley, Kendal  
Cumbria LA8 9PL  
Tel: 01539 822222  
Fax: 01539 825079  
Email: [info@cumbriatourism.org](mailto:info@cumbriatourism.org)  
[www.cumbriatourism.org](http://www.cumbriatourism.org)

Dear Peter

### **A Unitary Authority for Cumbria**

Following consideration by Cumbria Tourism's Executive Board on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 07, I am writing to report that following a vote of members, the Board with majority support, voted in favour of the concept of a Unitary Authority for Cumbria.

Cumbria Tourism is a private company limited by guarantee and a membership organisation. Cumbria Tourism has a membership of over 2,300 businesses and organisations, and represents the largest commercial sector in Cumbria. Cumbria Tourism Executive Board is made of representatives from the commercial sector, VisitBritain (the national lead body for tourism), Cumbria County Council, the Lake District National Park Authority, the six District Councils, Business Link and the Cumbria Learning & Skills Council.

The Board welcomed the recognition of the importance of tourism in Cumbria in the Bid Document and agreed that real progress and strategic coherence could be achieved with a Unitary Authority.

The Board reviewed the then Cumbria Tourist Board response to the 2003 Local Government Boundary Review (see attached paper), and the majority view agreed that in the interests of tourism development that a Unitary Authority would be desirable for Cumbria. However, there remained a number of concerns about local area community involvement and accountability and the extent to which key decisions are devolved to the proposed local Area Committees.

Cumbria Tourism will be pleased to be involved in the future development and establishment of a Unitary Authority for Cumbria.

Yours sincerely

**Ian Stephens**  
**Chief Executive**

[www.golakes.co.uk](http://www.golakes.co.uk)

Accommodation Booking Service: 0845 450 1199



A company limited by guarantee  
Registered in England Company No. 0517384



English Gate Plaza, Beechergate, Carlisle, CA1 1BP, United Kingdom

T +44 (0)1845 121 9222

E [sales@agilisys.co.uk](mailto:sales@agilisys.co.uk)

W [www.agilisys.co.uk](http://www.agilisys.co.uk)

From Andrew Mindenhall  
Director

17 January 2007

Peter Stybelski  
Chief Executive  
Cumbria County Council

Dear Peter

**Cumbria County Council: Bid for a Unitary Authority**

I want to take the opportunity to write to you on behalf of Agilisys to acknowledge our full support to the Cumbria County Council bid for a unitary authority.

As the ICT strategic partner for Cumbria County Council, we believe the proposals that have been put forward are compelling and in the best interests of Cumbria and its people.

We have been delighted to work closely with the Council in supporting the case for a unitary Cumbria, and very much look forward to Cumbria being successful with its bid.

Kindest regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Mindenhall". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Andrew Mindenhall  
Director

18<sup>th</sup> January 2007



Peter Stybelski  
 Chief Executive  
 Cumbria county Council  
 The Courts  
 English Street  
 Carlisle  
 CA3 8NA



Dear Mr Stybelski

**Local Government Proposals**

I am writing on behalf of Cumbria Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (CACVS) to express our support, in principle, for the proposal in the Government White Paper for unitary authorities.

We recognise the benefits of combining the functions of County and District Councils, taking examples of best practice from both and we believe that strategic planning can be best achieved by a unitary authority.

It is also our belief that regional and national bodies perceive Cumbria as having a particular identity and a wide range of organisations already deliver to Cumbria as a whole. In recognition of this the 5 district CVS in Cumbria – Barrow, Carlisle, Eden, South Lakes and West Cumbria are in the process of working towards merger from April 07 to form a County-wide organisation – Cumbria CVS. This reflects a commitment to more effective, efficient administration of services that will be delivered equitably, accessibly and with sensitivity to local needs across Cumbria.

We would look forward to working in partnership with a new unitary authority structure capable of giving strong leadership and ensuring better engagement locally. We understand that consultation will be carried out over the next few months and we look forward to the opportunity to engage, and facilitate the engagement of the Third Sector across Cumbria, in that consultation process.

Yours sincerely

Karen Bowen  
 Chief Officer Designate  
 Cumbria Association of Councils for Voluntary Service

Facsimile: 01768 217479  
 Telephone: 01768 217006  
 Telephone: 0845 33 00 247  
 e-mail: hollie.mark@cumbria.pnn.police.uk

My Reference: MB/HM  
 Your Reference:

Chief Constable:  
 Michael Baxter QPM

Police Headquarters  
 Carleton Hall  
 PENRITH  
 Cumbria CA10 2AU

Peter Stybelski  
 Chief Executive  
 Cumbria County Council  
 The Courts  
 English street  
 Carlisle  
 Cumbria CA3 8NA

7 January 2007

Dear Peter

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the County Council's proposal for a unitary authority in Cumbria.

There are a number of factors regarding the shape and effectiveness of any unitary authority which will impact on operational policing and will depend on how coterminosity with police structures at the proposed area committee and community board level operates.

Although the new areas will initially be based on existing district boundaries to secure continuity in service delivery, the proposed structure provides the first challenge to operational policing as the four areas are not coterminous with the three present Basic Command Units within the Constabulary which are currently based on a district authority pairing:

North Cumbria BCU	=	Carlisle & Eden
South Cumbria	=	South Lakes & Barrow
West Cumbria	=	Copeland & Allerdale

In current structures East Cumbria would be serviced by both North and South BCUs and clearly this would not be practical or desirable. The proposed four areas will be reviewed as part of the Boundary Committee's evaluation of electoral arrangements (likely to be in 2009) – so the shape of the area committees might change, making it difficult for the Constabulary to provide for the proposed model efficiently until the future is more certain. Suffice it say that the Constabulary can reconfigure to suit any new local authority structure and would do so to maximise the benefits of partnership approaches..

The proposed community boards are the bedrock of the bid and these could make a significant contribution to improving the operational performance and effectiveness of Local Policing Teams. It is, however, imperative that the Constabulary's Local Policing Team areas are coterminous with the proposed community boards so that these benefits can be maximised - that is, more joined up services across all public sectors; streamlined processes resulting in quicker, more efficient and more effective action; joined up consultation; improved data collection and community intelligence; providing a forum for local challenge; identifying local priorities, including community safety issues and delivering community action plans, supported by delegated budgets, to improve quality of life issues for the public.

2

Whilst public sector agencies and authorities are currently working together through Cumbria Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreements to deliver against stretching targets, a unitary approach might improve capacity to achieve these inter-agency targets and increase the pace of change by streamlining decision making. In addition, the paper proposes improvements in specific areas such as a countywide strategy for litter and graffiti management, for abandoned vehicles, single strategies for improved integrated services which will help the Constabulary and County deliver their targets for accident rates, children, young people and vulnerable people.

The paper proposes that the existing Local Strategic Partnerships will be removed by the community boards and states that the new unitary will have the capacity to work through a new Cumbria Strategic Partnership to negotiate and lead delivery of a new LAA through these community boards. With the exception of Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership leading a countywide CDRP as part of the LAA, no mention is made in the paper of responsibilities in the Crime & Disorder Act or about the future of the other Crime Reduction Partnerships in the county and how these would or would not fit in with the new model. The vision expressed does not specifically refer to promoting community safety even though there are references to policing and community safety elsewhere in the document. In my view, specifically including a statement concerning Community Safety in the vision would strengthen that vision.

The proposed model offers opportunities for the Constabulary to share public access points, communication and business continuity arrangements which might be worth exploring further to identify potential efficiencies. Subject to decisions to be made at government level on the future of policing after unsuccessful amalgamations, the Constabulary might consider investigating other shared services to identify further potential efficiencies.

A major economic factor which has a bearing on the proposal is the rationalisation being undertaken in other public sector organisations in the county – currently the Crown Prosecution Service and Her Majesty's Court Service, and potentially other parts of the criminal justice system. The prospect of police amalgamations has not entirely receded and my view is that police amalgamations may be back on the agenda in the foreseeable future. The county depends on the public sector for well paid employment and it is likely that much of the proposed change will occur at the same time over the next 3 – 4 years (excluding the loss of 8,000 high value jobs at Sellafield over the next 10 years). This is likely to have a detrimental affect on the county when taken altogether and will impact on the pool of talent available to organisations and local economic wealth. In addition, where there is a poor economy, there is likely to be more crime and disorder.

I believe that there is much commend a single unitary authority for Cumbria and the many efficiencies that could be achieved by a reduction from the present seven to a single authority. However, it would be difficult to support such a proposal if performance effectiveness were put at risk as result of change and there would be a clear need for a well constructed change and benefits plan.

The Constabulary is not reluctant to consider structural or operational change or to align itself with local arrangements to ensure that our communities are well served and I look forward to more detailed information and consultation on this matter should matters progress towards implementing the unitary proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Baxter QPM  
Chief Constable  
Cumbria Constabulary









One council, One vision, One voice,  
working with citizens and communities  
to create a better Cumbria.

---