



Report Title	Safe and Strong Communities
Meeting	Eden Locality Board
Meeting Date	24 April 2024
Report Author	Nick Wright – Senior Manager, Community Services
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Virginia Taylor – Sustainable Communities and Localities
Wards Affected	All in Eden
PUBLIC. PART EXEMPT, OR FULLY EXEMPT	Public
Appendices (if any)	Appendix 1 – Eden Locality Board Discretionary Budget Summary Statement for 2023/24 and 2024/25 Appendix 2 – Place Action Group update briefing Appendix 3 – Highways, Infrastructure and Connectivity Working Group Action Log

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Safe and Strong Communities report brings together information from across the community team. This report provides Eden Locality Board with an update on the work of each area, identified activity against priorities, highlight current issues and provide an overview of the budget position.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the status of the Eden Locality Board discretionary budget.
- 2.2 Note the communities update contained within the report at 3.1 - 3.29.
- 2.3 Members are asked to agree one representative for the new UK Shared Prosperity Funded Grants Panel for cultural initiatives as described in 3.27 - 3.29.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The Eden Locality Board Communities Budget allocation is based upon the 2024/25 budget agreed by the Budget Council for Westmorland and Furness on Tuesday 22 February 2024.

- 3.2 This initial allocation of £145,427 was boosted with an additional one-off allocation of £100,000 to support community planning.
- 3.3 This report updates Members on the status of the Locality Board's Budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25 which are summarised in appendix 1.

Place based activity and community development

- 3.4 The existing Area Planning Group for Appleby met at the Public Hall on Tuesday 19 March for their last meeting as an area planning group for Appleby. Final updates on the local action plan were discussed. These include the public realm work to replace bollards in the town - funded by Eden Locality Board Strong and Connected Communities Fund. The Tourist Information Centre Officer provided a comprehensive update on the schedule of events and activities planned for the town, and heritage trail additions moving forward.
- 3.5 The group reported that the construction of the new play park was now in progress and would be completed by the Easter Holidays. The outcome of the Place Standard Tool Town Assessment had been collated - over 90 responses were received with a wide range of suggested improvements for the community. This will be discussed with the town council and assist with priority setting for the council plan.
- 3.6 Members of the Appleby Area Planning group will be invited to join the new Place Action Group for Appleby & Brough. Officers are working through the plans to kick start the new group in the council area which will come together for their first introductory session in early May. A wide range of stakeholders including parish and town councils, community groups and strategic stakeholders will be invited to join the group and contribute to achieving local priorities.
- 3.7 The existing Area Planning Group for Kirkby Stephen met online for their final meeting on Monday 11 March. Final updates on the local action plan were discussed. Members updated on the local priorities which are in progress. These included Jubilee Park volunteer work and the public realm improvements funded through UKSPF - including town signage, a new play park, a community garden on Silver Street and improvements to the visitor centre. The individual projects are being progressed with contributions for a range of stakeholders include the town council, tourism officer, economic and community development. All are being progressed at pace to meet timescales for UKSPF programme which must be completed by January 2025.
- 3.8 In AOB members provided an update on the additional bus service that will provide services for Kirkby Stephen, consultations on reduced speed limits through the town and the developments of the Town Forum group who are now meeting regularly to progress economic activity for the town. The development of the Place Action Group is underway, a wide range of stakeholders including parish and town councils, community groups and

strategic stakeholders will be invited to join the group and contribute to achieving local priorities. The first introductory session will be scheduled for May.

- 3.9 The Penrith Borderlands town team met on 20 March. The group has elected Member and officer representation from Westmorland and Furness Council and Penrith Town Council as well as representatives from the business and third sector. Inclusive and green growth colleagues have been working towards Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP) sign-off by the Borderlands Partnership Board. The Penrith BTIP is the first to go through this process with the Borderlands Programme Management Office. The BTIP will now go forward to the Place Programme Board on 26 April. Members of Eden Locality Board have been provided with a briefing on the status and process. At its meeting, the group also agreed to move forward with a working group to consider economic development in Penrith falling outside of the Borderlands funded programme such as initiatives in the town centre. This group will properly consider this, and a remit will be agreed. Eden Locality Board will be kept informed as the group (and associated actions) takes shape.

Place Action Group (PAG) Update

- 3.10 Officers continue to work closely with Members and local stakeholders as they look to establish initial meetings for Place Action Groups. There is an update briefing on PAGs in appendix 2.

Living with poverty in Eden

- 3.11 On Tuesday 6 June 2023 Westmorland and Furness Council Cabinet agreed funding for research into the impacts of living with poverty in Westmorland and Furness. The proposed work is to facilitate meaningful, hopefully transformative, listening and learning between two groups of people, those who understand poverty by lived experience, and those who have influence and power from a governmental, civic or statutory point of view.
- 3.12 In Eden, a piece of work has been commissioned to Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) alongside Citizens Advice Carlisle and Eden (CACE) and Age UK. Initial research has been undertaken to inform the study including a rural poverty literature review and review of poverty in Eden from published sources.
- 3.13 As of the end of March, 10 semi-structured interviews have taken place with a range of agencies who have experience of working with and supporting local households experiencing poverty. Via CACE and Age UK, personal interviews with those experiencing poverty themselves and how it has impacted their lives are also taking place to inform the study.
- 3.14 There will be an update and engagement session in May with ACT to fully engage Members in the work and to discuss next steps.

Community Services and Libraries

- 3.15 In January, Adult Learning formally joined the team in Penrith Library. They now have a permanent base there alongside the Registration Service leading to an immediate increase in enquiries and courses being based in the library and added a valued new element to the services provided within the building. From April, the team will be working with our Adult Learning colleagues to provide support for those wanting to take the Life in the UK test.
- 3.16 Alongside the usual library activities – Baby, Bounce and Rhyme, Lego Club, English Club and Chess Club in Penrith – the team have hosted school visits and hearing aid clinics. In terms of outreach, they team have conducted Book Trust Storytime sessions and distributed Book Trust resources to over 14 local nurseries and conducted craft sessions in Cold Springs residential Home.
- 3.17 Drop-in information sessions in all libraries have covered sustainable travel, parking consultation, Appleby Horse Fair, energy home upgrade grants and bereavement support as well as regular visits from the health and wellbeing coaches and the refugee resettlement team.
- 3.18 Appleby Library has a thriving Craft Club based there alongside the existing Reading and Writing Group and has recently introduced a regular cancer support drop-in session. They have also welcomed regular nursery and school visits supported by the Library Outreach Project Officer.
- 3.19 Last Month, the new Westmorland and Furness library app was launched which is now available to all members to check out their nearest library, manage their online account, link to social media and “What’s on” pages, and access the online resources offer directly - eBooks, eAudio and magazines. Users can even scan a book in a bookshop - check if the library has it and then reserve it free of charge. Alongside the app, there is also a 360-degree library tour of Penrith library accessible via the website. These initiatives have been funded by a Library On project bid and are a welcome addition to the library offer.

Locality Board Working Groups and workshops

- 3.20 The Highways, Infrastructure and Connectivity working group met on 21 March and enjoyed a full agenda covering the A592 Safer Road Scheme, Active Travel, Sustainable Travel and Transport Fund and Scheduled Bus Services. The action log from this meeting is available at appendix 3.
- 3.21 Members attended a workshop for the Council’s Community Power programme on 14 March. This programme reflects Westmorland and Furness Council’s aspiration to work in a community focused way enabling communities to participate in the decisions which affect where they live and the services they use, as well as mobilising community strengths and enhancing community collaboration. The interactive session enabled Members to share how they were already working alongside communities to address local priorities, explore aspirations for how they would like the

Community Power Programme to evolve, and consider any steps and opportunities which could be taken to advance community powered ways of working.

- 3.22 At its workshop on 21 March, Members undertook budget planning and were also updated around the Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) £1.7m awarded to Westmorland and Furness Council from the Department for Transport to enhance bus services in the area. Members were updated on options and heard that, to ensure the services supported by the latest tranche of BSIP+ funding meet the needs of communities and lead to well-supported provision, there would be a consultation offering Members, Parish and Town Councillors, residents, businesses and visitors, the opportunity shape spending plans. More information on specific planned consultation activity has been emailed to Members previously.

Community grants and local investment

Eden Locality Board Devolved Communities Budget

- 3.23 Eden Locality Board held a budget planning workshop on 21 March to discuss allocations for the 2024/25 devolved communities budget the output of this is contained within a separate paper to this Locality Board. Updates on activities and decisions in applying this budget will be tabled at Board meetings throughout the year.

Strong and Connected Communities

- 3.24 Community Officers, elected Members and local stakeholders all collaborated to identify projects across the localities for consideration for the Strong and Connected Communities fund based on Place Action Group and ward areas. A total of 33 projects were supported across the entire breadth of Eden often providing match funding for projects including play areas, village hall refurbishments and upgrades, and support for local community group initiatives.

Eden Community Transport Grants Panel

- 3.25 As part of the Local Sustainable Travel and Transport funded programme agreed on 18 October 2023, Members allocated £20,000 towards a Community Transport Grants Panel. The panel met to consider its second tranche of applications on 18 March and supported two applications which resulted in the fund being fully applied.
- 3.26 The panel awarded £3,000 to Brough Parish Council to repair and update a local bus shelter and £5,900 to Fellrunner Village Bus Ltd towards the purchase of a new, low floor, wheelchair accessible bus. Information on both projects have previously been shared with Members.

UK Shared Prosperity Funded Cultural Grants Panel

- 3.27 Two successful funding bids were submitted to the Uk Government Shared Prosperity fund. One application was for £100,000 to deliver grants to improve the events and festivals offer across Westmorland and Furness. Small grants will be offered internally or externally to small organisations requiring funding to improve the quality and functionality of events and festivals. The objective for this fund is to support 10 organisations to improve events and festivals, provide 22 organisations with non-financial support to improve their events and festivals offer, support 10 amenities and facilities and reach 1000 people with the project benefits.
- 3.28 The other successful application was for £200,000 for Arts Culture and Heritage to improve community involvement in existing cultural, creative and heritage organisations, enhance current facilities, increase wheelchair access and footfall. Funding will be offered internally or externally to small organisations requiring funding. The objective for this fund will be to improve 8 culture or heritage assets, support 7 events, make 50 m2 of land wheelchair accessible support or step free and create 10 facilities. Grants funding in the Barrow area would be used for capital and revenue and grants in Eden and South Lakes would be used for capital only.
- 3.29 A grants panel consisting of Portfolio holder Cllr Virginia Taylor, council officers and one member from each Locality Board is required to make transparent decisions on grant applications. The first virtual panel meeting is scheduled for Summer 2024. It will depend on the number of applications whether both funds are considered in one panel meeting or there are two separate ones. Members are asked to agree one representative to this panel.

4. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (People, Climate, Communities, Economy and Culture, Customers, Workforce)

- 4.1 The community leadership role of Eden Locality Board has the potential to link to all the Council Plan priorities through improved collaborative locality working. Increased locality-based working and shaping services locally can ensure that priorities remain relevant to our communities and keep local people at the heart of council delivery.
- 4.2 Eden Locality Board agree its own targeted priorities based on local issues and opportunities while remaining in line with wider Council priorities.
- 4.3 The locally devolved funding is available for the Locality Board to allocate within the area to support positive outcomes for the communities of Eden. This funding can be targeted to initiate new activity or to enhance / complement existing provision according to locally determined need.

5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 No consultation outcomes

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 Members may choose to either agree the recommendations as presented or suggest alternative proposals.

7. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 7.1 The recommendations are to note and to keep Members of Eden Locality Board updated on the status of the devolved communities' budget and the ongoing work of the communities' team. They are also to ensure local representation in Westmorland and Furness initiatives.

8. Climate and Biodiversity Implications

- 8.1 There are no climate and biodiversity implications directly related to this report.

9. Legal and Governance Implications

- 9.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the Locality Board will undertake to allocate funding grants within the terms of a Community Grants Scheme developed by the Cabinet. To allocate discretionary budgets, make decisions and develop activities in supporting locality working, projects and activities within the terms of any scheme that may be developed by the Cabinet.
- 9.2 Cabinet guidance has been provided (attached at Appendix 2 of the Devolved Communities Budget Report) and the Locality Board should have due regard to this guidance on the use of the Locality Boards revenue budget allocation and criteria. This includes Highways revenue, general Budget, 0-19 Budget 11-19 Universal Services allocation and money advice.
- 9.3 The Locality Board is empowered in accordance with the Constitution to agree and keep under review the implementation of Local Sustainable Transport schemes for the area. Local Sustainable transport schemes could include footpaths and rights of way, cycling and walking improvements, school streets, community transport support. The fund will help improve public health and the environment by reducing congestion, air pollution, carbon emissions and supporting healthier lifestyles.
- 9.4 The Director of Thriving Communities is responsible for poverty and food inclusion, community power and grant programme commissioning under 3.23 of the Scheme of Delegation found in Part 2 Section 6 of the Constitution. The Director is responsible for agreeing the allocation of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund (HSF), for Locality Boards to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials.
- 9.5 The report refers to funding that has become available via a successful UKSPF application. The grant panel will need to have regard to any UKSPF requirements associated with the funding. The Council may distribute grants in accordance with agreed criteria to ensure consistency and transparency across the process. Due weight must be given in terms of equalities duties and fairness. Should the council distribute funds not in accordance with these principles, then it could be at risk of legal challenge.

- 9.6 Grant awards will be made subject to appropriate terms and conditions and with regard to the Council's Finance Procedure Rules and any UKSPF terms and conditions. Officers will liaise with Legal Services in the preparation of appropriate grant funding terms and conditions and with regard to Subsidy Control compliance.
- 9.7 The Council is under a legal obligation to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Decisions of the Council may be challenged by judicial review if the subsidy control rules are not followed or not followed completely. Grants or other measures may be suspended, and orders for damages or recovery of any unlawful subsidy made. The Council may suffer reputational damage if an unlawful subsidy is made.
- 9.8 Any Members appointed to the grants panel should seek legal advice from the Monitoring Officer where there is any concern that a situation may arise where there might be a problem with an interest arising from their involvement with an applicant.

10. Human Resources Implications

- 10.1 There are no human resources implications in respect of this report.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 The Locality Board's 2024/25 budgets are summarised in Appendix 1 and detailed in this report.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty, Armed Forces Veterans, Care Experienced, Rurality, and Socio-Economic Inequalities implications)

- 12.1 There is no Equality Impact Assessment for this report.

13. Risk Implications

- 13.1 There are no risks identified as part of this report.

14. Background Documents

- 14.1 No background documents.