Meeting of the One South Lakeland Partnership Board **To be held in the Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall** **12th March 2014, 2.00 p.m.**	

AGENDA

No.	Item	Lead
1.	**Welcome & Apologies**	Graham Wilkinson
2.	**Nomination for Chair (2 years)** To receive nomination for Chair	Claire Gould
3.	**Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 11th December 2013** To approve the minutes of the last meeting (attached) **Rolling Action Plan** (attached)	Graham Wilkinson
4.	**SLDC Strategy for Economic Growth & Invitation to Business Networking Event** (document to be sent separately)	Caroline Leigh
5.	**Health & Well-Being Forum** Update board on the development of a new South Lakeland Health & Wellbeing Group	Claire Gould & Helen Bailey
6.	**Proposed One South Lakeland Structure**	Graham Wilkinson
7.	**Peer Challenge Outcome** (two documents attached)	Claire Gould
8.	**Organisational Updates**	All
9.	**AOB**	
10.	**Date of Next Meeting** Wednesday 4 June - 2pm - Georgian Room	

Future Meetings:

4th June 2014 – 2pm. Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall.
3rd September 2014- 2pm.Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall
3rd December 2014 – 2pm. Bindloss Room, Kendal Town Hall
4th March 2015 – 2pm. Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall

Distribution List:

Graham Wilkinson, Principal, Kendal College and Chair, One South Lakeland Board

Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Helen Bailey, Clinical Commissioning Group

Peter Thornton, Leader, South Lakeland District Council

Mark Pannone, Chief Superintendent, Cumbria Police

Janette Jenkinson, CALC

Robin Battersby, Senior Development Officer, CVS

Richard Leafe, Chief Executive, Lake District National Park Authority

Cath Davenport, Chair South Westmorland Local Area Partnership

Lawrence Conway, Chief Executive, South Lakeland District Council

Enid Fraser, Executive Officer, South Lakes Federation

Mike Taylor, Chairman, Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Tom Bell, NHS Partnership Trust

Geoff Cook, Cumbria County council

Claire Gould, Policy & Partnerships Manager, South Lakeland District Council

Inge Booth, Democratic Services Officer, South Lakeland District Council

John Greenbank, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Assistant, South Lakeland District Council

Chris Woods, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Minutes of a Meeting of One South Lakeland Board
Held in the Georgian Room, Town Hall, Kendal
Wednesday 11th December 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

Present
Members

Graham Wilkinson (Chairman)	***Principal, Kendal College***
Mark Pannone	***Chief Superintendent, Cumbria Police***
Peter Thornton	***Leader, South Lakeland District Council***
Debbie Storr	***Director Policy and Resources, South Lakeland District Council***
Lawrence Conway	***Chief Executive, South Lakeland District Council***
Jocelyn Manners-Armstrong	***Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority***
Robin Battersby	***Senior Development Officer, CVS***
Cath Davenport	***South Westmorland LAP Chair.***
Tom Bell	***NHS Partnership Trust***
Helen Bailey	***CCG***
Shaun Kenney	***NHS Partnership Trust***
Geoff Cook	

Also in Attendance

Claire Gould	***Policy & Partnerships Manager, SLDC***
Emilie Thornley	***South Lakeland District Council***
Phil Greenup	***South Lakeland District Council***
Graham Vincent	***Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder South Lakeland District Council***
Paul Philips	

Action Required By

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed those present.

Apologies for absence were received from;

Richard Leafe – Chief Executive, Lake District National Park Authority

Janette Jenkinson - CALC

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 11th September 2013

AGREED – That the Minutes of the 11th September 2013 meeting approved.

Rolling Action Plan:

Graham Wilkinson presented an update on the rolling action plan as attached.

3. Health / Clinical Commissioning Update.

Clinical Commissioning Group has replaced all Primary Care Trusts & there are now 211 CCG's. All GP Practices are now part of the CCG and have 2 yearly meetings.

Commissioning Support Units have been set up to provide support to all GP's and other clinicians to commission effectively. This support offers a range of functions providing for example: HR, Data control etc. This will be set up until 2016 whilst they work towards becoming independent providers.

NHS England oversees the structures as an independent board accountable to the health secretary. Public Health now moved to the County Council. Public Health England overseas local health providers.

Cumbria CCG have come up with 5 Priorities these are:

- Improve care to respond to challenging ageing population.
- Improve health of Children & Young People & Quality & Integration of Care Services.
- Improve Mental Wellbeing & reduce alcohol misuse.
- Reduce health inequalities & premature mortality disease.
- How we modernise health services. Higher quality of care.

Better Care Together – will cover planned care, urgent/emergency care, maternity and paediatrics.

South Lakeland priorities:

- frail and elderly
- urgent care model
- improve long term conditions
- remodel primary care
- Better Care Together.

For more information please find attached the Health & clinical Commissioning Update:

Add the web link too
Structure web link: http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/nhs-65/alternative-guide-new-nhs-england

4. Draft Strategies for Consideration

- **Draft Public Health & Wellbeing Strategy**

Functions delivered by the district council will support the reduction of and prevention of individuals requiring health services. The draft strategy sets out the district councils contribution to; encourage adults to stop smoking, reduce alcohol excess, healthy eating, physical activities and use and access to green spaces.

The council will be also supporting, affordable housing, employment, economic development/growth and safer communities this will reduce fear of crime and also will contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of residents.

The new leisure provider will promote healthy activities across District.

Excessive winter deaths are high in South Lakeland and the council is now working with partners such as green deal and the community switching programme to support families and individuals to reduce their energy bills.

- **Draft SLDC Council Plan**

Council Plan 2014-19 - has been distributed for consultation. All responses are required by 20th December.

- **Draft One South Lakeland Plan**

Draft Plan of One South Lakeland had been updated and distributed.

Action:

1:1 sessions to be set up with each organisation to develop the targets. — Claire to arrange.

- **Updated LEP Plan and Strategy**

The strategy will be completed by the New Year and published.

The 4 Key Priorities are:

1. Business – Inspiring and supporting local businesses to reach their potential – Locally, Nationally and Internationally.
2. Skills – Ensuring motivated and skilled people, both employees and entrepreneurs.
3. Infrastructure – Ensuring the right Infrastructure to support business competitiveness and growth.
4. Environment – Using Cumbria's environment as a key economic asset.

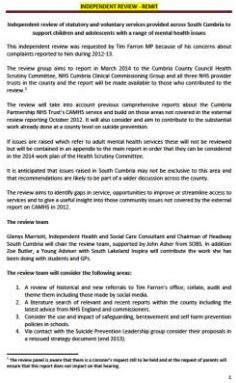
5. Organisational Updates

LAP's :

LAPs are considering issues with Broadband, health initiatives with the Better Care Together consultation and what LAPs can contribute locally to encourage economic growth across local SMEs in their areas.

Police: Mark Pannone
"South Lakeland continues to enjoy a reduction in overall crime and anti-social behaviour levels. Serious assaults, criminal damage and dwelling burglaries are showing clear reductions. There is an increase in 'non-injury' assaults which is being monitored, but this is likely to be due to the approach of early intervention and positive action against offenders at an early stage, preventing escalation.
Any member of the group who requires an update on any specific area of crime is welcome to speak to Supt Pannone. Positive work continues with the Community Safety Partnership to address the key areas of crime which are affecting local communities."

NHS Partnership Trust: Tom Bell
Glenys Marriott is working along with Tim Farren on a particular project if you would like more information on this then please contact Tom Bell and I shall provide Glenys details.
(Document attached with further information on this project)



INDEPENDENT REVIEW - REMIT

Independent review of statutory and voluntary services provided across South Cumbria to support children and adolescents with a range of mental health issues

This independent review was requested by Tim Farron MP because of his concerns about complaints reported to him during 2012-13.

The review group aims to report in March 2014 to the Cumbria County Council Health Scrutiny Committee, NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group and all three NHS provider trusts in the county and the report will be made available to those who contributed to the review.*

The review will take into account previous comprehensive reports about the Cumbria Partnership NHS Trust's CAMHS service and build on those areas not covered in the external review reporting October 2012. It will also consider and aim to contribute to the substantial work already done at a county level on suicide prevention.

If issues are raised which refer to adult mental health services these will not be reviewed but will be contained in an appendix to the main report in order that they can be considered in the 2014 work plan of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

It is anticipated that issues raised in South Cumbria may not be exclusive to this area and that recommendations are likely to be part of a wider discussion across the county.

The review aims to identify gaps in service, opportunities to improve or streamline access to services and to give a useful insight into those community issues not covered by the external report on CAMHS in 2012.

The review team

Glenys Marriott, Independent Health and Social Care Consultant and Chairman of Headway South Cumbria will chair the review team, supported by John Asher from SCIBS. In addition Zoe Butler, a Young Adviser with South Lakeland Inspire will contribute the work she has been doing with students and GPs.

The review team will consider the following areas:

1. A review of historical and new referrals to Tim Farron's office; collate, audit and theme them including those made by social media.
2. A literature search of relevant and recent reports within the county including the latest advice from NHS England and commissioners.
3. Consider the use and impact of safeguarding, bereavement and self harm prevention policies in schools.
4. Via contact with the Suicide Prevention Leadership group consider their proposals in a reissued strategy document (end 2013).

* The review panel is aware that there is a Coroner's request still to be held and at the request of parents will ensure that this report does not impact on that hearing.

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Remit of Review - Glenys Marriot 1

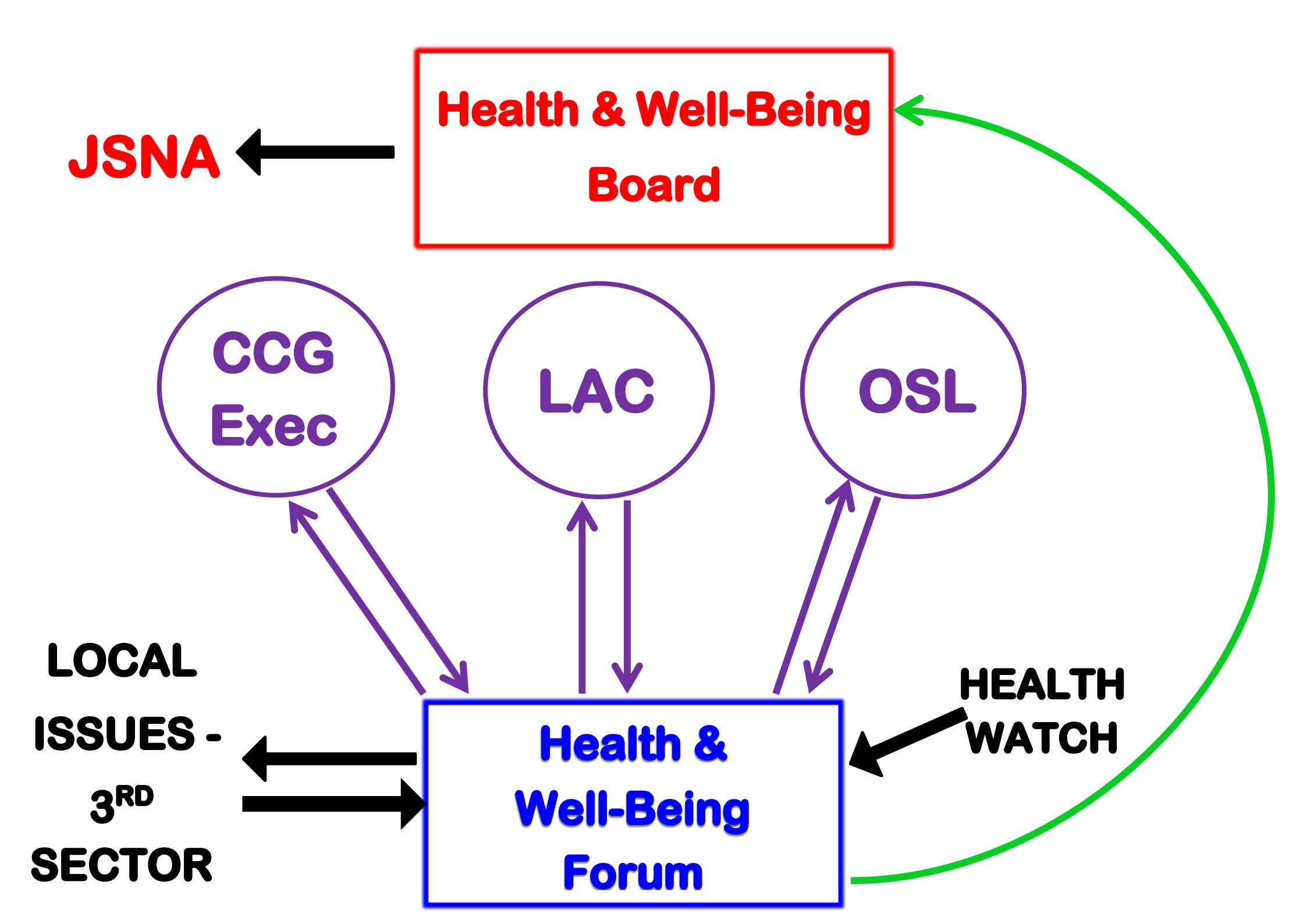
6. AOB:
The group was asked to consider nominations for the Chair of the One South Lakeland Partnership Board to commence at the meeting in March 2014 for a two year period.

Action
Nomination to be sent to Claire Gould for voting at the next meeting

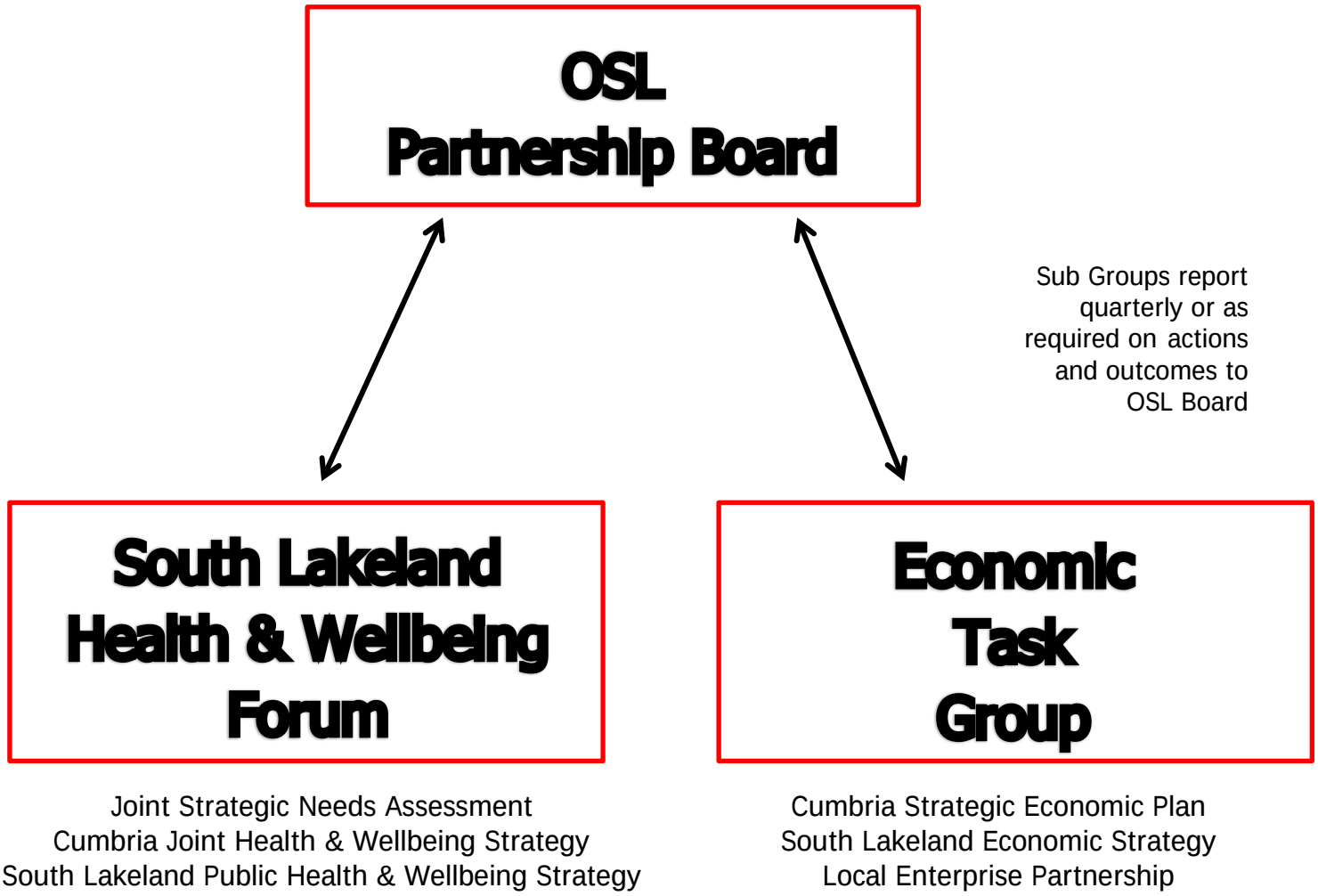
Date of next meeting
12th March 2014 - 2pm. Georgian Room, Kendal Town Hall.

Rolling Action Plan – 12th March 2014

Ref.	Date	Action	Who	When	Update
1.	12.6.13	Letter to Cllr G.Cook - meeting attendance at the board.	Graham Wilkinson	18.08.13	Acknowledgement received Cllr Cook to attend from December Board meeting in a personal capacity not representing CCC. Completed
2.	12.6.13	Development of the OSL Plan – input is required from Health and Education	Graham Wilkinson	12.3.14	Update at Meeting
3.	16.03.12	One SL Website to be updated to show links to partnerships across the County and District	Claire Gould	On-Going	Website development – new software and design being rolled out.
4.	11.09.13	Provide briefing/scoping document for Board to consider for the delivery of the Economic Growth half day Workshop. To be delivered by 31.03.14	Claire Gould	12.3.14	Update at Meeting
5.	11.09.13	All organisations to complete their targets and actions for the One South Lakeland action plan, details to be sent to Claire Gould	All Organisations / Claire Gould	12.3.14	Update at Meeting
6.	11.09.13	Update on LEP Plans and Strategies.	All	31.12.13	Completed


Health & Well-Being Board
JSNA
CCG Exec
LAC
OSL
LOCAL ISSUES - 3RD SECTOR
Health & Well-Being Forum
HEALTH WATCH

Draft Structure for Consideration by One South Lakeland Partnership Board



Lawrence Conway
Chief Executive
South Lakeland District Council
South Lakeland House
Lowther Street
Kendal
LA9 4DQ

13 February 2014

Dear Lawrence

South Lakeland District Council – Corporate Peer Challenge
27 – 30 January 2014

On behalf of the peer team, I would like to say what a pleasure and privilege it was to be invited into South Lakeland District Council to deliver the recent corporate peer challenge as part of the Local Government Association (LGA) offer to support sector led improvement.

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at South Lakeland were:

- Steve Atkinson – Chief Executive, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
- Councillor Howard Sykes – Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Alan Kirkham – Service Director ICT & Projects, Wakefield Council
- Steve Ingram – Assistant Director, Environment, Growth & Planning, Huntingdonshire District Council
- Gesche Schmid – Local Government Association
- Jill Emery - Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

Scope and focus of the peer challenge

All corporate peer challenges consider the following five core questions:

1. Understanding of the local context and priority setting: Does the Council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?

2. Financial planning and viability: Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
3. Political and managerial leadership: Does the Council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
4. Governance and decision-making: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
5. Organisational capacity: Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

In addition you asked the peer team to provide observations and feedback on:

- economic regeneration and your plans to deliver this key priority and
- how best to utilise Information Technology to design and deliver better services

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual Councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a Council's own performance and improvement focus. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 4 days on-site at South Lakeland, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 80 people including a range of Council employees together with Councillors, external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 35 meetings and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 200 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 6 weeks in South Lakeland.

This letter provides the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their onsite visit (27th – 30th January 2014). This letter provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing. We hope the feedback provided will help stimulate further debate and thinking especially around economic development and IT.

Summary of feedback: overall observations and messages

We saw and heard that South Lakeland is a special place but that it comes with its own particular issues. The impact of high house prices and lower wages, the large number of visitors to the area, the ageing population and the additional planning constraints in the National Parks all create an environment that can, at times be challenging. There are high levels of customer satisfaction and your work with GlaxoSmithKline, Kendal College and other businesses is already promoting both skills and investment in the district.

You have recently reviewed the Council Plan and this is broadly shared by all political parties. The aim to create 1000 new jobs and 1000 affordable rental homes is now the key priority for the Council. This recognises the need to grow the economy but also to attract and retain people in the district.

The Council benefits from strong leadership at both political and managerial level and this is recognised both internally and externally to the Council. This is a well managed authority where senior managers are visible and approachable and employees are motivated and committed to deliver positive outcomes for the people, businesses and visitors to South Lakeland. You have managed the financial challenges well and you have clear strategies and plans in place to deliver your priorities. You have also recognised the need to identify a range of options if there are unforeseen changes to the financial position.

South Lakeland District Council is well regarded by its partners and you show a real commitment to positive partnership working. We heard that one of your strengths is 'being there' at partnership meetings. Your approach to partnership working has ensured that the priorities of the Council are well known to partners. You are rightly pleased that your Local Plan has been approved and a range of strategies are now in place to deliver your priorities. The emphasis now needs to be on delivery.

One issue that came out strongly and consistently in our meetings was that there is too much time and effort spent on non-strategic detail and process. If the Council wants to move swiftly and benefit from innovation then there is a real need to review processes and decision making. This applies to the political, but also the managerial environment. We recognised that this is partly due to the long history of no overall political control of the Council but lessons can be learned from this. It is now time to let go and move forward

Summary of feedback: current performance, ability and capacity to deliver future ambitions

<u>Political and Managerial Leadership</u>

The Council has strong political and managerial leadership who work well together.

South Lakeland District Council is pro-active in communicating the needs of the district and its communities in other forums. The Leader is currently a very effective member of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and this has ensured engagement and wider endorsement by partners in South Lakeland's priorities.

The Council is beginning to develop a national profile through the work of the Leader and the Chief Executive at various forums e.g. District Council Network, LGA meetings and the Chief Executive's regular column in the Municipal Journal. Senior managers are also engaged in professional networks both nationally and regionally. The Council has had a number of restructures in recent years, but a period of relative stability is now envisaged which would be welcomed by employees.

The Council Plan has been updated to ensure that it accurately reflects political priorities and ambition and this has broad political support. Recent changes to the role of portfolio holders also reflect the redefined priorities of the Council. The Leader has ensured that these priorities and ambitions are considered in the wider context of the Local Enterprise Partnership and other key partnerships.

Members have been engaged in a wide range of development opportunities that have helped them in their roles. This should continue to have a high priority to meet changing demands and encourage enhanced team working, reflecting the developments amongst Managers, especially where a number of portfolio holders are responsible for a key priority area.

There is a tendency for some decisions, both political and managerial to take more time than may be necessary. Opportunities will arise which will benefit from the acceptance of an element of calculated risk. A streamlining of internal processes based on and supported by suggestions from Managers will also encourage speed, innovation and engagement.

Governance and Decision Making

You have recently reviewed the performance management framework (January 2014) which follows the Plan – Do – Review approach. It is now clearly aligned to the four key priorities in the Council Plan. Performance is managed on a quarterly basis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Reports will adopt a scorecard approach and this should provide relevant information on the priority areas. As the new framework has just been introduced we were unable to see how it will work in practice, but the potential is positive and we encourage managers to ensure that this potential is met in practice.

Although the Scrutiny process has a role in the management of the Council's performance, it has the potential to add greater value by being more forward looking. Scrutiny could be particularly beneficial in the constructive shaping of policy development. The current arrangement does enable Scrutiny to look at new policies but this is at the end of the process rather than being engaged in their development. We are conscious that the structure and process of Scrutiny has been refreshed but the question we posed to you was – 'is it sharp enough?' By this we mean that the process

might benefit from greater focus on a smaller number of key priority issues and pieces of information, rather than gathering and attempting to analyse vast amounts of data, much of which may be largely irrelevant. The saving of time and effort in collection and analysis could be significant.

This point highlights a continual thread throughout the challenge: the way that both members and managers can be distracted by too much detail. This may be due to lack of clarity around the purpose of reports, processes to progress ideas from employees or too much emphasis being put on detail by members. It is important, therefore, to stress that members have set the strategic direction of the Council and need to ensure that priorities are being delivered. However, the way priorities are delivered is a function of management and it is the responsibility of managers to ensure that priorities are translated into the right actions to deliver those priorities. A strategic overview by members is integral, indeed essential to their role but the unnecessary involvement of members at operational level can impact on resources and capacity and slow down delivery.

We found that both members and managers are involved in a range of meetings which are both time and resource intensive. You may want to look at the way meetings are arranged and structured, especially those between members and managers to ensure that there is a specific focus and all interested parties are involved in one meeting rather than in a number of smaller, separate and unconnected meetings.

Understanding of local context and priority setting

Information from a range of sources has been used to develop and update the Council Plan. This includes Cumbria's Joint Strategic Health Assessment 2012-2015, the Cumbria Business Survey and customer feedback. There has been a deliberate change to the Plan from 'Corporate' to 'Council' to make this meaningful for the people of South Lakeland. The plan now reflects redefined political priorities. The challenge now for the Council is in the delivery of the plan and meeting the target of 1000 new jobs and 1000 affordable homes for rent. This priority has been well-communicated across the Council, district and the region.

One area we did question was how the Council will evaluate and respond to new, unexpected and emerging demands. You are comfortable with a mix of delivery models and this has been demonstrated by the transfer of public toilets and tourist information centres to other providers. However, resources are finite and there may be occasions in the future where difficult decisions need to be made by members to stop providing certain services.

The One South Lakeland Partnership Board has a role in ensuring the delivery of the shared long term outcomes for the area by means of sharing and aligning the business plans of major partners. Although partners are engaged and there is scope to pool budgets/share plans, delivery of the outcomes is not yet apparent. We pose the question to you: Are the arrangements in place for One South Lakeland actually

delivering? We suggest that you review this and, if they are not, the Council needs to promote and support more action-orientated arrangements.

Financial Planning & Viability

In line with all local authorities, South Lakeland District Council has experienced significant reductions in funding. Net expenditure has reduced from £19.4m in 2010/11 to £13.1m for 2013/14. You carried out a number of service reviews in 2011 and looked at over 40 services as part of this, challenging methods of delivery. This has resulted in savings of £1.182m rising to £3m by 2017/18. The Council also transferred its housing stock to South Lakes Housing and entered into shared service arrangements with Eden for IT and a shared management structure for Revenues and Benefits. The current and medium term financial position, therefore, appears to be robust.

As a result of your financial position you have no immediate need for prudential borrowing. However, you have also recognized that there are potential financial risks and you have identified a range of savings options that are ready or currently being investigated for implementation, should they be required. We were impressed with the methodology for the identified savings and the use of a traffic light ranking system for each one.

One of the big issues for the Council is that of car parking charges. The Council quite rightly recognises that a balance has to be struck between income generation and the impact upon local businesses and tourism. There has been a great deal of discussion, consultation and analysis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee around this issue, but the Council now needs to make a decision on how it wants car parking charging to fit into the overall economic, environmental and social strategy and communicate this decision to partners and the public, to ensure that everyone understands the rationale.

Organisational Capacity

Throughout our visit we met with a range of employees and saw that morale is generally good. This is a Council employees are proud to work for and they are encouraged to be ambassadors for the Council. The Council is experiencing a period of stability in terms of its workforce and this has had a positive impact on employees.

Employee development is well resourced and appreciated by employees. The recent motivational training based on S.U.M.O (Shut up, Move On) is clearly having an impact and employees are referring to this when dealing with issues at work. You have plans to move on to the next stage of this training. The appraisal scheme has been reviewed and links into the Performance Management Framework. Feedback on its operation is currently being collated. In November you were awarded the Bronze award for Investors in People and are currently working towards silver.

You have trained managers to pro-actively manage sickness absence, which has resulted in sickness levels reducing to 6.49 days which is below the national average for local government. This will have a positive impact on both capacity and morale.

It is impressive that you have created opportunities to deliver savings which have not significantly affected capacity and services. Our concern is that there may be times when capacity needs to be increased in specific areas in order to deliver your priorities. We suggest that you make increased use of time-limited project teams and flexible resourcing, as you did successfully with the delivery of the Local Plan.

Shared services are being delivered in some areas but this has been on an ad-hoc basis, as and when an opportunity arose. This has been a laudable approach, which has increased capacity and delivered improvements. We think your approach to shared services could be enhanced by adopting a strategic framework. This will enable you to assess the benefits and risks of any proposed shared service arrangement against a set of criteria, before undertaking more detailed and time-consuming work. This will give you the freedom to partner with a range of other local authorities, rather than align yourself with a specific one.

Economic Regeneration

You have a clear and ambitious strategy to deliver the economic development priorities and you are one of the few authorities to have an adopted Local Plan in place. We recognise that this is a considerable achievement in itself but this now needs to be transformed into a robust and active (by which we mean 'taking action') delivery plan. This is particularly necessary in the area of affordable rented housing which is a real challenge for the Council in terms of both retaining young people and attracting people to work in the district.

The Council has positively shaped the local impact of the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan and created the opportunities for successful local partnerships. We know that the Leader has played a fundamental role in promoting South Lakeland as part of this and has gained the respect of partners.

You have worked with other local authorities and organisations where the benefits of doing so make sense.

You have used Council assets in order to support growth e.g. land for the Kendal College extension to enable them to build an engineering campus to meet the skill demands of local and potential employers. To make further use of Council assets to accelerate economic regeneration and support your economic priorities, the adopted Corporate Property Strategy now has to be delivered without unnecessary referral and review.

We were impressed by the Economic Development team and this was endorsed by partners and the business community. They are seen as dynamic and committed to delivering sustainable growth. They have been active in supporting businesses and have pro-actively identified sites for new hubs. We saw one example of this in Ulverston, which will provide 10 units. Support for GlaxoSmithKline and their investment in a new bio pharmaceutical manufacturing plant was highlighted as a key success

story for the Council, as was the support provided to Hawkshead Relish, to note but two. As part of this development the Planning service has been fundamental in ensuring that proactive support on planning issues has been given a high priority, which has been, and continues to be valued. Development Management (not Development Control) in the Council is clearly engaged in shaping and assisting quality developments which will assist future growth plans.

Working with the Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency and Furness Enterprise the 'Invest in South Lakeland' and 'Explore South Lakeland' websites have been developed and are positive examples of recent promotional activity. The websites showcase local businesses, provide business support and promote the area in terms of both inward investment and tourism.

One area where we felt the Council could do more to promote the local economy was in procurement. We know there are targets for the Council to purchase goods and services locally but we heard examples of where the procurement process often became a barrier to achieving that objective. This was particularly the case in small businesses that do not have the resources to complete lengthy tender documents or where the Council was tied into bigger contracts through a regional purchasing agreement and could not buy cheaper goods from a local supplier.

There is more the Council could do to demonstrate its commitment to engaging with local and small businesses, and you may wish to consider, if you are not already doing so, some of the following:

- Include a clause in your contracts for companies to pay sub-contractors and suppliers on same terms as the Council's
- Review processes for low value purchases
- Use a simple Pre-Qualification Questionnaire for low value tenders
- Engage with small businesses, perhaps using the local branch of the Federation of Small Businesses

Information Technology

We found that the shared service arrangement with Eden DC in terms of Information Technology was strong and has delivered the original objectives. The service now needs to evolve to meet the changing demands and service needs placed on the Council, particularly the channel shift and improved transactional capability that has been articulated by the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Innovation and Improvement. You may also wish to consider how these are addressed in the next version of the ICT Plan to ensure that IT is aligned to the Council's priorities.

The IT staffing resource seems to be appropriate for an authority of this size and appears to have the necessary skills and motivation to continue to deliver a high quality service. The IT team has demonstrated it can deliver innovative solutions; for example, the implementation of Lync telephony.

Throughout our visit we were made aware of issues relating to both access to systems and their usability. We should add that the views were inconsistent and we heard of both positive and negative experiences. Part of these issues we think relate to the quality and quantity of communication and engagement with both members and employees. This is around expectations of what systems can and cannot do and also about the level of service that IT can provide.

Although many of the issues we encountered with the use of IT could be seen as operational, there is a lack of clarity regarding whether IT is perceived as operational or strategic in delivering the Council's priorities. The Council recognises that there are issues regarding the use of IT, but in the current organisational structure IT is not represented effectively at a strategic level. IT is championed at Member level (via the Portfolio Holder for Innovation and Improvement), but it was not clear how well IT is championed at management level.

The Council recognises that its website needs to be refreshed with a modern transactional portal that will enable the public to access, pay for and monitor services in a customer focussed way.

We found that there is a desire for all parts of the Council to embrace technology and new ways of working. However, we also found that there are inconsistent managerial approaches to this. Some managers are at the forefront of new ways of working while others are showing some reluctance to engage with developments in flexible and mobile working. We would recommend that the senior management team continues to drive this to ensure the desired change happens.

The Way Forward - Suggestions for consideration

In addition to what we have suggested in the previous paragraphs the team has developed some areas for your consideration. These are based on what we saw, heard and read. They are things we think will help you improve the organisation and its capacity to deliver your future ambitions and plans:

1. Members need to take decisions and devolve their management and implementation within a less onerous but more strategic reporting framework – most importantly they need to stay out of unnecessary detail
2. Internal working practices need to support the emerging thematic and cross-cutting portfolios and help all Members make timely and informed decisions
3. Ensure focus is now on accelerating the delivery of all your strategies and plans
4. In the context of economic development and taking account of the demographics and geography of the district, you should consider the adoption of a strategic decision-making tool as the basis for identifying appropriate partnerships with any/all your neighbours, in order to identify and take advantage of the relevant benefits and opportunities as they arise

5. Decide how IT is positioned within the organisation, recognising the growing importance of the use of IT in respect of service delivery and supporting your priorities

Next steps

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions made with your senior managerial and political leadership before determining how the Council wishes to take things forward. As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued activity to support this. I know you had some discussions with Neil Shaw from the LGA following the feedback meeting and he can be contacted on 07876 688987 or via e-mail at neil.shaw@local.gov.uk

In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge to date. Gill Taylor, Principal Adviser (North West) is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Gill can be contacted via email at gill.taylor@local.gov.uk (or Telephone 07789 512173) and can provide access to our resources and any further support.

All of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Once again, many thanks to you and your colleagues and to everyone involved for their participation. The Council embraced the challenge positively, transparently and openly. In particular, please pass on our thanks to Ellie Taylor and her colleagues for the excellent support and assistance in organising the challenge and the onsite visit.

Jill Emery - Peer Challenge Manager

On behalf of the peer challenge team