

REVISED ITEM 8

CARLISLE AND EDEN UNITARY AUTHORITY A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**Part of a common submission by
Five District Councils in Cumbria**

The logos of:
Allerdale District Council
Carlisle City Council
Copeland Borough Council
Eden District Council
South Lakeland District Council

Preface

All six districts of the county of Cumbria have worked together on proposals for unitary structures in the area.

The following five district councils of Cumbria; Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland believe that their first options collectively provide a structure of unitary local government that would deliver effective, efficient and convenient local government for the people of the current county of Cumbria. For all five districts their first option comprises three unitaries:

Allerdale and Copeland
Carlisle and Eden
Barrow and South Lakeland

The sixth district's preferred option (Barrow) complements these with the addition of Lancaster City to the Barrow and South Lakeland proposed unitary.

The Boundary committee wishes to see submissions recommending unitary authorities that are effective and convenient, close to local people and viable and durable. This means that local authorities need to be local enough to be able to hear and respond to community need, whilst being large enough to provide the full range of services for which a unitary authority is responsible.

We believe that our preferred options collectively demonstrate the best structure for unitary local government in Cumbria. This is one that recommends authorities that are close enough to communities to involve and empower local people in local decision making, whilst having the capacity to provide the full range of local government services efficiently and effectively.

Signed by the leaders of each district authority

Contents

Introduction

1 Principles

2 North West Regional Context

3 Cumbrian Context

4 Local Profile

5 Current Pattern of Service Provision

6 Proposals for Delivery of New Services

7 Joint Arrangements

8 Political Representation

9 Conclusion

Introduction

In October 2004 the people of the North West of England will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not they wish to have an elected regional assembly. If they vote yes, then the creation of an elected North West Regional Assembly will mean that local government in Cumbria will be delivered by all purpose unitary authorities (or authority) as opposed to the two tiers of county council and district councils currently in operation. Unitary authorities will deliver the full range of services currently provided by the two-tier system within the County Council and the District Councils.

The people of Cumbria will have the opportunity to choose from at least two models for unitary authorities in the county. In order to determine what these choices should be, the government has asked the Boundary Committee to advise, and the Committee requires each affected local authority to submit its proposal for the future of local government in the event of an elected regional assembly being established.

Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council have both decided that their preferred model is for three unitary authorities in Cumbria. This model will pair Carlisle City Council with Eden District Council, Allerdale District Council with Copeland Borough Council, and South Lakeland District Council with Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council, based on the authorities current boundaries.

Specifically, the councils of Eden and Carlisle consider that a unitary authority based on the borders of the two existing districts is best for the people they serve because:

- **It's the right size.** It is very important that a new unitary authority strikes the right balance between being too big and too small. If an authority is too big, then it may have more resources at its disposal, but it can become distant from the people it serves; councillors may be expected to represent more people than they effectively can, or councils can become unwieldy and bureaucratic. If an authority is too small then it will lack the capacity to deliver services efficiently and effectively.

The councils of Eden and Carlisle believe that a unitary authority based on the whole county would be too big. A unitary authority based on Eden and Carlisle's boundaries would be large enough to ensure it has the capacity to deliver high quality services. But just as importantly, it would be small enough to be flexible, responsive and able to shape its services to the needs of people.

- **Carlisle and Eden form a natural area.** Carlisle and Eden have a lot in common. The two district councils have recognised this for some years and the strong partnership between the two authorities evidenced in this document demonstrates that. The border with Scotland to the North and the Pennines and Cumbrian Fells to the East and West enclose an area with a strong sense of identity and community. The M6 and the West

Coast Mainline mean that people tend to travel North and South in the area, meaning that Eden and Carlisle form a natural economic area based around the river Eden basin.

- **It makes sense for the delivery of quality public services.** We know this because we already provide a range of statutory and non-statutory services jointly. The Carlisle and Eden Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership and the Green Box Recycling Scheme are just a few examples of how the two districts have been working together, and with other partners, to deliver quality public services jointly across the area of the two districts. The creation of a new unitary authority would mean much more than just stitching the existing districts together with services currently provided by the county. However the success of these initiatives shows that some of the building blocks are already in place to build a new authority that will provide excellent and accessible public services for all of the residents of Carlisle and Eden.

This submission describes the context in which Eden and Carlisle currently operates. It provides and points to the evidence that the best unitary authority for the people of Eden and Carlisle would be based on the existing boundaries of the two districts, and it presents a vision for the delivery of excellent public services shaped by the needs of people.

As part of this process, Carlisle City Council commissioned the Centre For Regional Economic Development (CRED) at Northumbria University to undertake some research. The purpose of this independent research is to provide an objective evaluation, against the criteria set by the Boundary Committee for England, of the "three unitary authority" option favoured by the majority of district councils. The report by CRED is publicly available and is submitted to The Boundary Committee by way of additional information, so the detail will not be repeated here. The report concludes that the three unitary model is a feasible structure for local government in Cumbria.

1. Principles

This submission was prepared in order to propose a new unitary authority that will deliver public services according to the following principles:

Providing Local Leadership

- Genuine Community Leadership
- A local approach that is close to and consults with the people we serve.
- Devolution of delivery to the lowest appropriate level and recognition of the significance of initiatives such as Quality Parish Councils
- Efficient and effective political representation and leadership

Strong Corporate Governance

- Accountable and transparent decision making
- Development of existing structures and partnerships, in particular local strategic partnerships
- Development of a new organisation that develops the potential of its people in order to recruit and retain excellent staff to deliver excellent public services
- Recognition of diversity with the Unitary Authorities of Cumbria and responding to needs, especially those of the most vulnerable and deprived communities.

Quality Services

- Excellent output and outcomes
- The provision of services that are sustainable, viable and durable
- Provision of equality of access to our services
- Provision of convenient and effective quality services

This submission demonstrates that the proposed Carlisle and Eden unitary authority will seek to continue to uphold the principles above. These principles are already evidenced in the two authorities; through partnership working, valuing diversity within communities, embracing strong corporate governance and demonstrating innovative and high quality service delivery.

2. North West Regional Context

It is important to remember that the primary driver for this debate on unitary authorities in Cumbria is the possible establishment of an elected North West Regional Assembly. It would be unwise to consider any new unitary authorities as simple amalgamations of county and district services as these will be delivered in the context of an elected regional assembly. It is therefore important to briefly consider the role of an elected assembly.

The White Paper, 'Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions', identifies the responsibilities of the proposed regional assemblies.

The chief themes of the Government's modernisation agenda are to improve services and to engage more with local people. Regional assemblies will do this by:

- Improving delivery by ensuring better co-ordinated government at regional level
- Giving regional stakeholders a clearer decision-making framework to engage with
- Promoting sustainable development and improving quality of life

The White Paper states that an elected assembly will be responsible for regional strategies dealing with the following areas:

- Sustainable development
- Economic development
- Skills and employment
- Spatial planning
- Transport
- Waste
- Housing
- Health improvement
- Culture and Tourism
- Biodiversity.

There will be important strategic roles for regional assemblies in other areas such as crime reduction, civil contingency planning and rural regeneration.

The strategic framework developed by the regional assemblies will give local authorities the freedom to develop and deliver local services catering for the needs of the communities they serve. Carlisle and Eden unitary authority will take the initiative to deliver services to local communities effectively and efficiently within the regional context.

The new, wholly unitary local authorities will, within the new strategic framework act as the community champion and chief service deliverer in their area.

3. Cumbrian Context

The most effective new unitary structure of local government in Cumbria is one that recognises the fundamental geographical issues, including:

- A large land mass that is physically divided by lakes and Fells
- A very sparse and dispersed population
- Community isolation
- Poor transportation links, particularly in rural areas and from east to west, long travel time to other large population centres
- Distinct communities
- Differing local priorities for different areas

Cumbria is the second largest county in England and Wales, covering an area of more than 6,760 sq km. It has a population of 487,607, which gives a population density of 0.72 people per hectare. This is considerably lower than the England and Wales average of 3.4 people per hectare.

Settlements are typically small and lie along the coast and the major communication routes. Only 20 settlements have a population of more than 2,500 and the city of Carlisle is the largest settlement with some 70,000 people.

The Lake District National Park occupies 2,292 sq km, and accounts for approximately one third of the total area of the county. This landscape contributes to the formation of natural geographic boundaries within Cumbria.

There are significant differences in the economic make-up of the county. Allerdale and Copeland still rely heavily on manufacturing, with almost 28% of the workforce employed in that sector. This compares to only 15% in Carlisle and Eden. Instead these areas, together with South Lakeland, have a higher proportion of workers employed in sectors that are linked to retail and tourism.

The relatively large manufacturing sector in the west of the county means that many workers there are reliant upon a relatively small number of companies for employment. This contrasts with the more rural east of the county where the percentage of self-employed people is almost double that of the western districts.

Wages also vary significantly across the county. For example, average weekly earnings in Copeland were £428 in 2002, compared to only £274 in Eden. This is reflected in the number of full time and part time workers.

However, the west of the county is also affected by higher levels of unemployment, with rates of between 4% and 5%, compared to the eastern districts, which have unemployment rates of between 1% and 2.5%.

There is also a definite split across the county when the Indices of Multiple Deprivation are considered. Allerdale and Copeland contain 24 wards that are among the 25% most deprived wards nationally, while Carlisle and Eden contain only seven.

However, despite this apparent lack of overall deprivation, Eden still has deprivation issues that affect its communities. An example of this is that three quarters of Eden's wards are among the top 25% deprived wards nationally in terms of access.

Transport links vary significantly across the county. There are good links from North to South, with the West Coast Main Line and M6 Motorway. There are also rail links along the west coast. However, the M6 is the only Motorway in the county and the other major roads in the county, that link it from east to west and along the west coast (i.e. the A66, A69, A590 and A595) are largely only single carriageway. This, together with the large area of the county, results in lengthy travelling times when moving between locations across the county.

These factors have caused distinct communities to evolve within Cumbria, each with their own individual needs and priorities. The new unitary structure of local government will need to be able to identify these clearly and act locally in order to best meet the diverse needs and priorities for Cumbria.

4 Local Profile

Geography

The proposed new unitary authority will cover the area currently served by Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council. This forms a natural area, around the river Eden, of approximately 3,100 sq km, enclosed by the Scottish border to the north, the Pennines to the east and the Cumbrian fells to the west.

Population

The population served by the proposed new unitary authority comprises of 150,516 people, 70% of which live within the main centres of Carlisle and Penrith. The remainder live in the settlements such as Alston, Appleby, Brampton, Dalston, Kirkby Stephen, Longtown and Wetheral, and in the small villages and agricultural settlements that are scattered throughout the large rural area. There are approximately 70,000 domestic dwellings within the area.

The size of the population in Carlisle district has remained fairly static over the last decade, whereas Eden has witnessed a 9% increase in population between 1991 and 2001 compared to 3% nationally. This is attributed to a high level of inward migration rather than natural growth.

Both Carlisle and Eden districts are among the 50 most sparsely populated district areas, out of the 376 local authority areas in England and Wales. The Carlisle and Eden unitary authority area would also be among the most sparsely populated in England and Wales, with a population density of 0.47 people per hectare.

Economics

The most significant employers within the area are engaged in manufacturing, distribution, public services, and consumer services, including tourism. 1 in 4 jobs in the rural area is in agriculture, an industry that was profoundly affected by the Foot and Mouth disease epidemic in 2001. Foot and Mouth disease still presents major challenges for the future of the rural economy.

A significant economic challenge within the area is presented by a relatively low wage economy. Wages in both Carlisle and Eden are on average lower than those in Cumbria and nationally. Pockets of deprivation exist within the area; four of Carlisle's twelve urban wards are among the ten per cent most deprived wards in England, while more than half (17) of Eden's wards are in the top 1,000 most deprived wards nationally for access.

The award-winning Lanes shopping centre in Carlisle and that attracted over 10 million visits in 2002, offers one million sq. feet of retail space and is the largest shopping centre north of Preston, west of Newcastle and South of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Penrith is an historic market town with a growing reputation as a sub-regional centre. The Southend Road regeneration project sees a mixed development extension to the town, which will promote and sustain the future vitality and viability of the town and the surrounding area over the forthcoming years. This partnership development is anchored by a major new food store, a range of non food retail space as well as office and residential accommodation.

Carlisle City Council developed, with its partners, the Kingmoor Park complex a premier business park of some 400 acres, with 1,000 jobs on site so far. This was established through the formation of a public/private partnership. Eden Business Park is a 37-acre site in Penrith. This Strategic Employment Site is being developed in partnership by the Eden District Council in conjunction with the North West Development Agency for higher added value and large scale strategic uses.

Environment and Transport

Carlisle and Eden districts benefit from the M6 Motorway, which runs through the two districts. Both districts also have their major settlements situated on the crossroads of the M6 and the two major east/west road links in the area, with Carlisle linking with the A69 and Penrith the A66. The A66 is undergoing improvement works, with the dualling of some sections of the route and the proposed Temple Sowerby by-pass. However, local public transport in rural areas is limited and presents a challenge for delivery of public services.

As well as the M6 Motorway, both Carlisle and Eden are connected by the West Coast Main Line and Settle-Carlisle Railway lines. The West Coast Main Line has stations in Carlisle and Penrith, while the Settle-Carlisle has six stations in the area (in Carlisle, Armathwaite, Lazonby/Kirkoswald, Langwathby, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen).

Transport and access are essential issues that need to be addressed if the prosperity of the area is to be enhanced and the environment is to be protected. Plans are being developed and progressed to enhance Carlisle Airport.

The landscape quality of the area is significant, with almost 50% of Eden within the National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Also, the River Eden rises in Eden district, and flows through both Eden and Carlisle before flowing into the Solway Firth.

5 Current Pattern Of Service Delivery

It is not intended in this section to recite the range of services currently provided by the district councils and the county council in the area to be served by the proposed unitary authority. This information is available in supporting material. This section focuses on the arrangements in place between Carlisle and Eden that will provide some of the building blocks for a new authority. A new unitary authority will of course be an entirely new organisation, not an amalgamation of two districts. It will organise its services and activities according to policies adopted by its members, informed by consultation and community engagement. These examples do however serve to illustrate how Carlisle and Eden forms a natural unit for delivery of quality public services.

Current Services and joint working initiatives

Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council have a rich history of working in partnership to deliver a range of projects and services, both statutory and non-statutory. The mechanisms used to provide services jointly cover a wide spectrum of delivery models. These are not restricted to formal contractual arrangements between the two authorities, although these do exist where a contract is considered to be the most appropriate way of ensuring effective service delivery.

The two authorities have often come together to provide services and progress initiatives in partnership for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is a very practical justification for joint working; this produces economies of scale and more effectively tackles the challenges faced by public bodies delivering services over a very wide rural area. Secondly the problems faced in the area do not stop or change at the shared boundary and the expansion of a solution tried and tested by one authority into the area covered by the second is therefore often the simplest and most effective method of tackling a shared problem. Finally a spirit of openness and trust exists between the two authorities at both officer and member level, this enables joint projects to be developed and implemented and for any problems that are encountered during this process to be aired and for solutions to be jointly sought.

Many officers have experience of working for both authorities and this has facilitated the sharing of ideas. Officers meet regularly at local and county wide professional groupings. The Carlisle and Eden LSP is a common thread running through all that both authorities do and deliver. Both authorities recognise the benefits that working in the wider LSP partnership can bring to enhance the economic, environmental and social well-being of the area.

Community leadership and community involvement form part of the shared ethos of Carlisle City and Eden district councils and good partnership working are viewed as an integral part of local public service. This is underpinned by both councils spending time, effort and resources in building capacity within the wider community and among partners to in order to meet the needs of

local people. This is evidenced in the LSP's activities and in the community involvement that has been undertaken to draw up the community strategies.

The regional and sub-regional agenda is also a regular topic at such meetings, ensuring that a common voice from Carlisle and Eden, is heard in county and North West partnerships and other arenas.

The Carlisle and Eden Joint Committee has been constituted to progress a range of issues that affect the area of both districts. Its terms of reference include the commitment to work jointly to maximise benefit from the development of joint initiatives and to support the communities of the two districts.

The range of services delivered in partnership include:

- **Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership.** The LSP was initially formed to meet the requirements for a community leadership role following the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001. Its initial purpose was to develop a rapid and co-ordinated response to the community, social and economic challenges that the outbreak brought. The LSP has grown and developed and its remit has broadened to encompass economic, social and environmental wellbeing. The LSP is developing a track record for attracting external funding to deliver projects to improve the quality of life for local people. It has recently attracted significant new funds to the Carlisle and Eden areas that the district councils would not have been able to access if acting alone examples of this include:
 - The Childrens' Fund has been accessed to deliver a 'Prevention through Performance' arts and crime prevention/awareness project in local schools across the two areas
 - National Lottery funded charity, Youth Music, is delivering through the LSP its 'Singing Communities' project in Carlisle and Eden
 - A new Eden Valley Cycle Way has been developed and launched, aiding tourism and bringing health and economic development benefits locally
 - Through Health Action Zone funding a public health worker will soon be employed to directly aid the work of the Local Health Groups (that report directly to the LSP)
 - Two pilot project areas in need of regeneration and multi-agency focus are being targeted through LSP partnership working.
- **Joint Community Strategy.** A draft joint strategy for Carlisle and Eden, 'Carlisle and Eden: A Vision for the Future', combines the vision and priorities set out in Carlisle Vision and Eden Futures. It reflects identified community needs and aspirations. The themes and priorities within City

Vision and Eden Futures were drawn together following comprehensive consultation with public, partners and voluntary sector, with individuals, groups of individuals and communities of interest.

This joint community strategy for the two areas provides a shared agenda for the development and provision of services within a new authority.

A unitary model of local government based upon the established partnership of the Carlisle and Eden LSP makes sense to many stakeholders in the area as evidenced by the CRED research. Many of the activities of the unitary authority fit within themes and priorities identified in the Joint Community Strategy. The unitary authority with operational responsibility like social services and education could make a real impact in those areas that matter to people locally. Apart from health many organisations have boundaries that are co-terminous with the LSP.

The Carlisle and Eden LSP's link with other agencies and partnerships are already successful. This is evidenced in the CRED report:

"Consultees have stressed the success of the relationships that currently exist between organisations such as the CVS and the districts and emphasise that there would be time costs involved in building up new joint working relationships with completely new structures.."

- **Carlisle and Eden Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.** This partnership was formed in 2001 when the partners of the existing two district wide partnerships recognised the benefits that could be derived from combining into one partnership. At the time of the merger it was unusual for two local authority areas to come together to form one CDRP. Both Council's contribute to a 'pooled budget' along with the Police, that supplements the funding allocated by the Government and it is used on projects that span across the two local authority areas. The CDRP Leadership Group brings partners together to work on improving community safety and aligning strategies such as those of the Drug Action Team and Drug Task Group. Consultative forums are held twice a year, which involve a wide range of agencies, organisations and community representatives, in order to facilitate problem solving.
- **Recycling Initiatives.** The two councils are working together to tackle our statutory recycling targets. Phase one (the "Green Box" scheme) covers 10,000 households in Carlisle and 4,600 in Eden. We are also operating (phase two) a pilot kerbside collection of garden waste using wheeled bins. Both schemes are proving to be very popular with participants, and making a significant contribution to the councils' recycling tonnages. We are also exploring means of extending recycling schemes through phases three and four of the development plan so as to enable us to meet the Governments statutory recycling targets. DEFRA have recognised the success of the partnership and are offering a grant of approximately £1million to extend the scheme.

- **East Cumbria Countryside Project.** ECCP is a partnership between Eden District Council, Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council established in 1985 with the support of the Countryside Commission. This project promotes and enhances the quality of the natural resources of the area, provides opportunities for recreation and enjoyment by local people and visitors, and helps to stimulate a sustainable rural economy.
- **De-criminalised parking.** Carlisle City Council developed expertise in the enforcement of de-criminalised parking in its own urban areas. Consequently when parking de-criminalisation took place in Eden a formal contract was entered into between the two authorities. Carlisle City Council as the contractor, enforces the scheme on behalf of Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council, at no additional cost to the taxpayer.
- **M6 Corridor.** The M6 Corridor initiative is a partnership that has been developed between Carlisle City Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council in order to increase inward investment into the three districts on sites around the M6 Motorway. The partnership also now includes the Cumbria Inward Investment Agency. This initiative received funding in April 2002 from Team North West and is now developing a website to attract businesses. Work is still on going and it is expected that the website will become live later this year. It is planned that, once live, this website will link into the North West Development Agency's on line database of sites and premises in the region.
- **Employment Alternatives.** Employment Alternatives is a partnership initiative between Carlisle City Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council, with each of the district councils providing core funding. Its overall objective is to provide training and support to people (largely across rural areas) in order to help them develop their business ideas and/or gain employment. The partnership began in 1996 under the title of 'Lifestyles', and was expanded and relaunched as Employment Alternatives in 2001 (in response to the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak). The scheme supports between 300 and 400 people each year.
- **Health improvement.** Each district's Local Health Group seeks to address the wider health and well-being agenda through information sharing and partnership working locally. The two groups have recently considered merging into one group covering the Carlisle and Eden areas and are committed to working jointly on a range of projects and initiatives as the health needs of local people are similar across the joint area. To support this, a new post of health development worker, operating across both districts has been created, the post holder is committed to supporting LSP objectives regarding health and well-being.
- **Children and Young People's Strategy.** Eden District Council and Carlisle City Council have, through the local strategic partnership and following consultation with partners, developed a children and young peoples strategy.

Performance - Carlisle City Council

"The Council has a good track record in initiating development and encouraging private sector investment. Its activities have been an important catalyst in creating and maintaining the City as the regional capital."

(Economic Development best value inspection, 2001)

Priorities in Carlisle City Council are driven by City Vision, the Community Strategy, and are developed in the Council's corporate plan. The City Vision contains five key themes, which are: Communities; Economic Prosperity; Health & Wellbeing; Infrastructure, Environment & Transport and Celebrating Carlisle. These priorities were chosen through detailed consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. Executive portfolios are aligned with the City Vision themes and there is a direct correlation between the three thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Executive portfolios. City Vision objectives are also included in the job descriptions of senior managers.

The Corporate Plan, and how to achieve it, forms the basis of recently revised Business and Team Plans, which are SMART and monitored on a quarterly basis at Corporate Management Team and at Overview and Scrutiny. Overview and Scrutiny also manage the improvement of those performance indicators in the bottom quartile.

The Waste Management inspection report said, the *"Council, Councillors and Officers together with other stakeholders, is committed to service improvement."* There is a general trend of upward movement in the Council's performance, based on national performance indicators over the past three years. 67% of BVPIs in 2002/3 showed improvement, with only six deteriorating. A corollary to that is the recent increase in customer satisfaction with Council services, with overall satisfaction rates increasing from 61% in 2000 to 80% at the end of 2002.

Carlisle City Council has recently introduced strengthened financial and performance review arrangements, which are becoming embedded. These include the development of a strategic set of performance indicators, to be monitored monthly, improved systems and software for quarterly performance monitoring and a more rigorous monitoring of qualitative aspects of performance through Business Plan progress reports at quarterly intervals during the year. Finance and performance issues are being more closely aligned through the recently established Strategic Financial Planning Group and the development of a portfolio with responsibility for both issues. The development and monitoring of individual performance is being improved through new policies and procedures, particularly for individual appraisals, and the establishment of a Strategic Staff Development Group.

The Council has received five best value inspections, two were rated as good with promising prospects for improvement, two were rated as fair with promising prospects for improvement and one was rated as fair with uncertain prospects for improvement.

The performance of district councils in Cumbria was comprehensively assessed by the Audit Commission in June of this year. Each council will receive a formal judgement in mid October 2003.

6. Proposals For Delivery of New Services in the Carlisle and Eden Unitary Authority

The context within which new unitary authorities will develop future services in the mid 2000s has changed significantly. The unitaries established in the mid 1990s tended to prioritise the matching of service provision against population size, whilst ensuring that the community leadership role was central to that prioritisation. To some extent, delivering new services then tended to be an additional piece of work to accomplish, with many unitaries tacking on new areas of work. The new unitaries will have much larger horizons, grounded in the Government's modernisation agenda that has helped to equip us to lead and become engaged with their local communities, major cross-cutting initiatives and increased partnership working. All of which have strengthened our role and capacity to deliver new areas of work. Added to this the now familiar regime of Best Value, performance indicators, the matching of achievements to funding streams (that can go up or down), show that local authorities like Carlisle and Eden who wish to become a unitary authority are more than capable of taking on the future challenges. We accept those challenges and see them as step changes rather than the leaps of faith that characterised some earlier unitary models.

As elected members and officers, experienced in taking on significant challenges in recent times, we believe that we can establish future services that are viable and durable and, which importantly, make sense to our local communities. The challenges will involve us building on the best of what exists, re-organising services where appropriate, developing new services and creating new connections between them that are understandable to local people. The possibility of becoming a unitary brings with it the desire to at last be responsive and flexible and to build our services around people rather than the other way around.

Before we outline our views on how we will deliver our future services, we re-emphasise the guiding principals that are at the heart of our vision for a new Unitary Authority for Carlisle and Eden

- Our role as a Unitary Authority is one of community leadership and local accountability that go beyond the provision of services
- We will be creating a new Authority and will not simply merging two District Councils
- We will take the opportunity to review and re-organise all our services, those established and new, to ensure they are highly effective. Where there is good practice we will build upon it. Our review of services will always involve consultation with our local communities
- For our services to be effective they will be local and clearly led and have real accountability

- We have a strong awareness of the major changes that our new Unitary Authority will bring and the impact that can have on individuals and groups. We will work positively and sensitively with everyone involved.
- The effectiveness of our future services will be based on outcomes that are performance-managed
- The delivery of our services will be supported by a robust workforce strategy to ensure we have the right number of staff with the right skills and knowledge to ensure high quality provision
- The Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Partnership will be instrumental in drawing our services together in partnership with other public organisations, together with the voluntary and private sectors, with the joint Community Strategy as the key focus to help us measure our outcomes across all our future services

In developing this aspect of our submission we have drawn together information and outcomes of discussions we have had with a number of established unitary authorities. These include Bournemouth, Halton, Warrington and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Councils, all of which are high performing Councils. In different ways these have helped us to consider the shape of our future services and perhaps more importantly, the lessons these Councils have learned from their own experiences. We have also learned from the experiences of Scottish unitaries who are already operating within the context of devolved government.

In addition we have been informed by supporting documentation, including OFSTED and SSI reports, LSC information, which have been particularly helpful in considering the shape of our 'new' services – Education and Social Services.

The services we currently deliver put us firmly in the public spotlight and all of them are subject to accountability through national and local performance targets. Many of these services are closest to the concerns of our local communities. They will all be reviewed in the development stage of unitary status. Our main aim is to look at where the connections between services can be established and/or strengthened, how they can be more responsive to our communities' needs and how economies of scale can bring efficiencies where they are needed. We will undergo extensive consultation on all these services to ensure that their future shape is strong in terms of structure and delivery.

In establishing our new services we are mindful of the joint arrangements that some services have established, some between District and County and others between Districts. We share the Government's view that joint arrangements can sometimes serve to confuse the lines of accountability for local people and that these should be avoided wherever possible. However we feel that there are some services that will need joint arrangements, not just in terms of making economic sense but to reduce that confusion. We want

our services to be economically viable so services such as the work of Coroner's will be shared across all the Unitaries in Cumbria, with one unitary taking lead body responsibility. In our discussions with other unitary authorities, we have noted that joint arrangements also change as unitaries develop and mature.

We are also concerned about those services that are currently being contracted out by Cumbria County Council and currently cover a wide range of areas. These too will be subjected to a rigorous review process.

We are outlining in more detail our vision for the delivery of Education and Social Services. These new responsibilities are significant and our political leaders and officers are establishing a clear and coherent understanding of both the challenges and the weight that those responsibilities will bring.

Education and Social Services

Education and Social Services will be vital services for the Carlisle and Eden Unitary Authority. We already have strong strategic and operational links as District Councils and through the Carlisle and Eden LSP. These links include the creative ones between leisure services and local schools community development work with children and young people and the development of child protection policies. In addition the LSP has recently developed a Children & Young People's Strategy and has representation on the County Council's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Carlisle City Council leads on the 'Post 16' group involving local secondary headteachers and further and higher education representatives, with its key remit to make the links between educational achievement and economic regeneration. The City Council is also the lead body for the Sure Start South Carlisle programme and has established strong working relationships with Social Services and the LEA.

Our vision is to look at Education and Children's Social Services together in order to build services around the needs of children and families. This unified approach is at the heart of our new authority and its work will influence and inform the work of other services, particularly housing and homelessness, environmental, leisure and regeneration. We do not underestimate the challenge of this approach and we will build upon the work already being undertaken by Cumbria County Council in developing a single service model and use the models of good practice developed in other authorities. These will include evaluation of children's trusts and other models identified. These models include a number of approaches, some incremental, some requiring major structural shifts, whilst others are based on the co-location of multi-disciplinary teams.

We recognise that this vision will require us to have a robust consultation framework in place and that the outcomes will require our elected members to take major policy decisions.

A new delivery model will support our new approach where children are seen in the context of their family, school and community. Our essential question will not be 'how is our new Service doing?' but 'how are our children doing?' In developing this approach, we will establish a Family Support Strategy that will include a single assessment system that allows all agencies to share a common approach to assessing and recording need. This will prevent children and families who require support services from a range of agencies from having to undergo numerous assessment processes. It will also ensure that the points of entry for all families are understood in terms of accessing service provision.

The role of the Health Service will be crucial for the success of a joint approach to service delivery for children and families. The remit of Health is necessarily complex and we are committed to working closely with our PCTs and the Acute Trusts to bring energy, innovation and creativity in our partnership working across Health, Social Services, Education and other services to give a real community sense to local needs. We will also work with Health to further develop the National Service Frameworks for Mental Health and Older Adults. We will ensure that the partnership established to support adults with learning disabilities is localised and strengthened. We want to ensure that the long term needs of this group of adults can stand the test of time and that our joint services being delivered in ten to twenty years will continue to support them. We acknowledge the good work that is already taking place across Cumbria in these areas of work.

Clearly our collaboration with our PCTs, together with private and independent providers, will include commissioning of services and our review of Children and Adult Social Services will help us to determine which elements we will contract and from which provider. We also need to review the community base from which those services can be provided, e.g. GP surgery, community centre, etc.

The voluntary, independent and private sectors will play a key role in supporting children and families and we aim to extend that role to enable these sectors to contribute their range of skills and experience that is not always available in the statutory sector.

The role of the LSP will be key in delivering our joined-up approach and we will ensure that through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, we will be accountable as a partner within the LSP to our local communities. The influence of the LSP will move us away from thinking about children's services in terms of agencies and funding to a concentration on functions that cut across organisations. As a unitary authority we want to develop a 'wraparound' service that revolves around families rather than expecting families to revolve around us.

As we begin to pre-figure our unitary status, we are already exploring the key issues that affect our children and their families, within both national and local contexts. These are some of them:

Early Years

We are committed to integrated care and education for children 0 – 5 and will work closely with the private and voluntary sectors to ensure high quality services are delivered. We are keen to further develop Children's Centres across Carlisle and Eden and to build upon the initiatives in Carlisle South that link to the Sure Start programme. We wish to make the links between high quality child care and progression routes for parents and carers into further/higher education and employment. We also aim to review early years provision in our rural areas.

We will support and further develop the recommendations made by OFSTED in its report of the LEA (June 2001) in terms of defining the distinctive roles of Nursery Schools. Our first priority will be to develop a Carlisle and Eden Early Years Partnership to oversee this area of work and the Partnership will be represented on the LSP.

Children aged 5 – 16

Our joint Service will initially focus on a number of concerns and issues impacting upon children in this age group, including: supporting children in public care, establishing a single assessment system and a unitary review of Special Educational Needs that has inclusion at its heart. We will address the transitional gaps between early years, secondary and further/higher education and focus on any outstanding concerns identified by OFSTED in their last inspection of Cumbria LEA, though it is likely that another inspection will take place before the establishment of unitary authorities.

We are particularly concerned to address the recommendations of the forthcoming Green Paper *Children at Risk* following the Lamming Report, which will inevitably influence the shape of our joined up approach.

The 14-19 Agenda (following the Government's publication *Opportunity & Excellence*) and the awaited Green Paper will be timely for Carlisle and Eden as the new authority addresses, in partnership with the LSC and its Schools, the learning and training needs of this age group. Educational achievement amongst this population is lower than the national average and there are issues for the 14-16 age group, particularly vulnerable children living in rural areas, which need to be prioritised. We are also keen to prioritise the needs of excluded children, the allocation of provision for them and the working relationships with local schools and to provide a network of services that will give real and lasting support.

The last inspection of Children's Services in Cumbria, undertaken by the Social Services Inspectorate, was in 2000 and further one is planned for October 2003. Therefore it will be the recommendations of the latter that will be of most concern to us.

Post 16

There are two key educational reviews that have recently been published, the outcomes of which will be of paramount concern to our unitary authority.

The first one – *Post 16 Learning Provision in the Carlisle Area* (published July 2003) that deals with the future organisation of post 16 learning and training with a particular focus on sixth form education. At the time of writing, consultation on future options are just beginning, so it is inappropriate to comment on them. However we wish to state that the new unitary and the LSC will work in partnership with other stakeholders, including local secondary schools and local further education institutions, to ensure that all the outcomes of the review are addressed. We are particularly concerned that the participation rate in full-time post 16 education in Carlisle and Eden is lower than the average rate for Cumbria as a whole and well below the national average participation rate.

We already have strong working relationships with Carlisle College and will work closely with them to help them achieve the aims of their emerging Strategic Development Plan and any issues that arise from the review of further education colleges across the county. We will be particularly concerned that the needs of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported in full time education and have clear progression routes into further/higher education and employment.

Our concerns also include the 16+ age group who are leaving care and the extent to which support mechanisms are in place for them. We will ensure that the corporate parenting role of our elected members is extended fully to this group of young people. The benefits of a unitary in terms of its local responsiveness are very helpful here and we will ensure that all our services are involved in a range of support mechanisms that help this group of young people become independent.

The second key review is of Higher Education in Cumbria and detailed in the *Fender Report* (published May 2003). The report identifies the need to raise the profile of higher education across the County and makes a strong case for the development of higher education as a major factor in the social and economic regeneration of the region and the development of a network of universities and colleges to become a 'University of Cumbria'. Given that two of the HE campuses are based in Carlisle, University of Central Lancashire and Northumbria University, together with two HE institutions, St Martins and the Cumbria Institute of the Arts. It will be essential for our new unitary authority to be closely involved in supporting the recommendations of the Fender report. We will also consider the work the Newton Rigg Campus and the University of Central Lancashire that, being in Eden it is a key provider of HE and FE provision.

At the time of writing, the Carlisle Post 16 Group (led by the City Council) is looking at the possibilities of funding two projects to support the work needed to address the outcomes of both reviews. This underlines our commitment

and pre-empts our future work as a new unitary and its key role as community leader.

We are mindful of our statutory role as providers and enablers of adult and community education and will work in partnership with the LSC to ensure that lifelong learning is an integral part of our service provision and this will involve the widening (not just increasing) our participation rates and extending the provision of skills for life (basic skills). Our concerns for adult learning include the needs of adults based in our rural communities and our links with partners, for instance the Rural Women's Network, to ensure that a diverse range of learning programmes with progression routes is on offer.

Older Adults

The new authority will be committed to excellence in residential support services based on a mixed economy of provision. Innovative good practice will be sought to drive improvement, together with new partnerships and relationships with clients. Joint Community and Working and new approaches between the new authority and Health will be developed to maximise output, outcomes and flexibility between services to meet local and national targets.

The vital role of home care and other support services for older adults is recognised and delivery options will be further developed. We will work with The National Care Standards Committee and voluntary organisations to deliver the best possible care.

Libraries, Museums and Archives

The role of Library, Museum and Archive services is crucial in the support of Lifelong Learning from early years to older adults. Both services are characterised by not always reaching the most deprived communities and a review will be an essential starting point as our Unitary Authority is developed. We are keen for both services to be clearly linked to Education to ensure that, within a multi-disciplinary framework of service delivery, the needs of children and families are central to the establishment of a responsive Library & Museums service.

We will look at joint purchasing arrangements with our regulatory unitary authorities and this will include the Mobile Library Services that we would wish to have a more central role in the lives of our rural community.

In addition, we see a crucial role for Libraries and equipment with a high quality IT available for isolated communities for them to be able to access Council services.

Waste and Highways

The future organisational arrangements for the provision of waste and highway services will be concluded when the overall strategic direction of the proposed directly elected regional assembly is known. It is envisaged that the new regional body will undertake the strategic functions and the new unitary authorities will provide the waste disposal activities currently provided by the county council and the waste collection and recycling functions of existing district councils.

Provision of Trading Standards

Trading standards services can cover a wide range of activities over and above the statutory duty of to maintain consumer and business confidence in fair trading. In developing this service the new authority would seek to identify ways in which the service could support community aspirations as identified in the Joint Community Plan for the area. It would seek to identify the potential for delivery of environmental, licensing and trading standards services as part of a combined approach to the development of a comprehensive package of services.

Whilst the National Performance Framework for Trading Standards would be used as the basis for service development, any new authority would need to be cognisant of the issue of service size on performance.

Workforce Issues

Our guiding principals include an awareness of the impact of major changes on individuals, including our established and future workforce and the need to develop a robust workforce strategy during the preparation stage of our new unitary authority.

We understand the difficulties that we will face in recruiting some staff, particularly specialist staff, in a climate of intense competition and existing chronic staffing shortages (especially in Social Services). Our workforce strategy, therefore will be developed in partnership, wherever possible, with other new unitary authorities and other agencies, particularly Health.

It will have at its starting point the services our unitary will need to deliver and the range of competencies required to deliver them. Some of those competencies will be core and specialist, whilst others may require multi-disciplinary skills.

Training and development will be a central feature of our Workforce Strategy, and we will start with awareness raising for Council staff and elected members of the key issues affecting Education & Social Services, including the national, regional and local pressures these services face.

Community leadership and engagement

A new unitary based around Carlisle and Eden would provide new opportunities for community engagement. Both authorities continue to listen and learn from individuals and communities within their areas and there is a high level of commitment and support for community engagement. For example, Carlisle City Council is currently carrying out a review on democratic engagement. This review examines how Councillors and officers of the authority can better engage with the public. The improvements and best practice ideas from this review could be used to encourage effective democratic engagement in the proposed Carlisle and Eden Unitary.

Parish and Town Councils will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the voice of smaller communities is heard. The new unitary would maintain and develop links and working relationships that have been established within the two areas. It would also need to consider and review the role of both Parish and Town Councils in the light of changing roles and new responsibilities. In particular, the new authority would wish to consider initiatives such as the Quality Parish Council Scheme with parish and town councils. In addition, the role of Neighbourhood Forums would need to be considered as part of a larger exercise on community involvement. This programme of discussion and development would use existing partnerships and consultation mechanisms to the full.

Finance

This submission at this stage does not address the financial requirements of the new authority as this is excluded from the remit that the Boundary Committee has set for stage one submissions. The district councils will examine the financial aspects of current and proposed new structures separately during later stages of the process.

All local authorities affected by the proposals for an elected Regional Assembly have already submitted financial information as required by the Boundary Committee.

7 Joint Arrangements

A Carlisle and Eden unitary authority in the context of a directly elected North West Regional Assembly will be self sufficient.

Three unitary authorities in Cumbria will represent the right balance of closeness to the people they represent and “critical mass” for capacity to deliver. This coupled with the establishment of an elected regional assembly with a strategic role will minimise the requirement for joint arrangements between unitary authorities. A flexible and local approach will be taken to joint commissioning and purchasing, to meet local needs and the constraints of geography. This will include, where appropriate, joint commissioning with other partners including health.

There is a recognition that in the transitional period very detailed mapping and evaluation of statutory services is required, particularly for education and social services. District Councils are considering agreeing to jointly commission service delivery mapping and financial modelling to inform procurement and service delivery patterns.

Joint arrangements may be envisaged in the following areas:

- Coroners - with a single authority taking a lead role on behalf of all three Unitaries.
- Fire –It is envisaged that responsibility for this function may be set at the regional level and, subject to clarification, it may require a joint board to be centralised.
- Economic Development – The pattern of strategic economic development support agencies will be discussed with existing regional and sub regional partners and agencies. This process will establish the most effective, economical and efficient arrangements for the future.

8 Political Representation

The precise nature of the political management arrangements for the new authority will be a matter for the authority itself, once fully constituted, to decide upon and in the light of government legislation at the time.

It is not intended at this stage of submission to rehearse the detail of the options available to the new authority but they will be those prescribed under the Local Government Act 2000 and, in respect of the executive arrangements to be adopted, under Section 11 of the Act.

Under the above legislative requirements, the various forms of Executive open to the authority will be:-

an elected mayor and cabinet or

a leader and cabinet or

an elected mayor and Council manager

It should be noted that, because of the potential size of the authority with an anticipated population of in excess of 150,000 and given that it will be a single tier authority, the alternative arrangements for a non-executive model of governance prescribed under Section 32 of the Act and accompanying regulations will not be available to the new authority.

It is assumed that, before deciding upon which executive model of political management to adopt, the new Council would undertake the consultation exercise prescribed under Section 25 of the Act and the accompanying ODPM Guidance and settle the form and detail of both the executive structure and the accompanying overview and scrutiny and regulatory aspects of its constitutional arrangements in the light of the feedback from that consultation. It may be that some transitional provision will be required to enable the creation of a "shadow" authority first with power to carry out the consultative processes referred to above and to put in place the detailed constitutional provisions for the new authority prior to the authority itself coming into being. There will be precedents for such an approach in earlier reorganisations involving a transition from multi to single tier authorities.

What will remain constant is the willingness to work co-operatively with new and existing partners and to seek to deliver services in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

The existing electoral arrangements in Carlisle and Eden are as follows:

| Carlisle City | Eden District |
|--|--|
| Population (2001 census) 100,739 | Population (2001 census) 49,777 |
| Electorate (July 2003) 79,756 | Electorate (July 2003) 40,039 |
| No. of Council members 52 | No. of Council members 38 |
| No. of wards 22 (12 urban and 10 rural) | No. of wards 30 |
| Councillor/elector ratio 1:1533 | Councillor to elector ratio 1:1053 |
| County electoral divisions 17 | No. of County electoral divisions 9 |
| County Councillor/elector ratio 1:4691 | County Councillor/elector ratio 1:4449 |

Combined Carlisle/Eden

A unitary authority created within the current boundaries of Carlisle and Eden would have a population of 150,516 and an electorate of 119,795.

Options for the size of a combined Carlisle/Eden unitary authority have to take account of the need to balance appropriate representation at local level with the wider strategic role of the new authority, and have regard to the particular geographical characteristics of the area. They would also have to facilitate electoral arrangements with the aim of achieving equality of representation across the whole area of the new council.

In the absence of statutory prescription of local authority sizes, the Electoral Commission's guidance on the present round of periodic reviews contains advice on council size, highlighting the current variation in size even between authorities of the same type. In formulating options, the need for sufficient councillors to represent constituents properly, formulate policy and represent the authority on external bodies and inter agency partnerships has to be weighed against the difficulties that can arise in internal management if there are too many councillors. It is noted that the Commission has no particular view on whether new management structures should result in change in council size although it expects the tendency towards reductions is likely to continue. The ability of non-executive members to hold the executive to account properly, however, would be impaired if there were too few councillors.

Options based on a simple combination of the existing number of District Councillors (90) or County Councillors (26) are discounted as either too big (being larger than the existing County Council) or too small.

If the current councillor to elector ratio for Carlisle (1:1553) or Eden (1:1053) were used instead, the resulting sizes of 78 and 113 would still be too large.

A combined Carlisle/Eden authority would have a population of 150,516 (2001 census). While it is accepted that Council size in any particular area will

depend on the characteristics and needs of that area, comparison of a number of existing unitary authorities of similar size in the regions under review nevertheless provides a pointer to what may be an appropriate range of Council sizes, as follows:

| <u>Authority</u> | <u>Population</u> | <u>No. of members</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Blackburn with Darwen | 137,470 | 62 ⁽¹⁾ |
| Redcar and Cleveland | 139,132 | 59 |
| Blackpool | 142,283 | 42 |
| South Tyneside | 152,785 | 60 ⁽²⁾ |
| North Lincolnshire | 152,849 | 43 |

1. periodic review final recommendation proposes increase to 64

2. currently under review – draft recommendation proposes reduction to 54

Options within that range result in varying levels of representation, as follows:

42 members – giving a ratio of 1 councillor per 2,850 electors

52 members – giving a ratio of 1 councillor per 2,300 electors

60 members – giving a ratio of 1 councillor per 2,000 electors

A 42 member authority would have a much lower level of representation compared with either of the existing councils, resulting in geographically much larger wards, particularly in the Eden area.

An authority of between 52 or 60 members might therefore provide more effective local government having regard to the multi-function nature of unitary authorities.

9 Conclusion

If the people of North West England decide that they want to be governed by a directly elected regional assembly then the people of Carlisle and Eden are best served by a Carlisle and Eden Unitary Authority.

A Carlisle and Eden Unitary Authority will have the capacity to deliver strategic services. This has been demonstrated by the independent research carried out by the Centre of Regional Economic Development on behalf of Carlisle City Council.

The new Unitary Authority will be the right size to build its services around the needs of the people it will serve because it will be small enough to remain in touch with people and accountable to them. We will build the delivery of the new strategic services with emphasis upon the needs of young people and families.

Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council have a long established partnership; working together effectively and enthusiastically to deliver high quality services. The next logical step is to build on the strong links between the two authorities as a new Unitary Authority is forged.

Ultimately the people of Cumbria and the North West of England will decide on how they want their services to be delivered in the context of an elected Regional Assembly. Those people deserve to continue to benefit from the strong bond between Carlisle and Eden and should be given the opportunity to select that option.

A Unitary Authority based on Carlisle and Eden will be feasible, viable, robust and will work.