LOCALITY WORKING
Report by the Rural Support Group February 2013

Introduction

This paper aims to summarise Locality Working and the progress which has been made in the Carlisle District. In addition details of Locality Working programmes which have been undertaken in other parts of Cumbria are given for information.

In Carlisle District we have a number of large and strong parishes. These sit alongside some very small and quite isolated parishes. While the large parishes can, and do, look after themselves, it is the small ones that may find that they miss out or fail to get the benefit of their relationship with Carlisle City Council.

These proposals are specifically <u>not</u> designed to introduce a further tier of local government. Other districts, such as Copeland, have found that Locality Working involving parish grouping or clustering, has enhanced the individual parishes and provided considerable benefit to parishioners. Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland have all developed groups of parishes to foster and develop comminity projects, some of them strongly tourism related. Each has a different relationship with its local District, Borough and County Council. It could be that the most successful projects are being run in areas where the parishes themselves have taken the initiative.

We hope that, by bringing forward this report now, we can take the opportunity to look at what is being done elsewhere in Cumbria and beyond, and maybe try and identify some project possibilities for Carlisle District.

What is Locality Working?

Locality Working is about people and government working together to make life better. It involves more people influencing decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling local problems, rather than expecting others to do so on their behalf.

How can Parish Councils get involved in Locality Working?

Parish Councils are the first tier of Local Government and therefore are the closest level of Government to the people they serve. This means that Parish Councils are in the strong position of being both democratically elected and locally accountable to be able to tackle local issues and concerns. However many Parish Councils are small in nature and lack the critical mass to tackle larger issues. This is where Locality Working can be of benefit in terms of parishes working together to improve effectiveness and tackle common issues or exert greater influence.

What are the benefits of Locality Working and what might be the concerns?

In order for parishes to engage fully with Locality Working they need to see that there are real benefits to be gained. The key reasons to take a locality based approach are:

- **Capacity** – Increasing economies of scale (e.g. clerk and office sharing)
- **Louder voice on common issues** – geographic community or community of interests can lobby for change or influence.
- **Addressing area-wide issues** – e.g. lobbying on public transport. May even be across District boundaries.
- **Better representation and influence** – stronger together.
- **Gaining services** – a cluster might be able to bid for a service from the principal authority.

- **Funding leverage**- more chance of gaining funding for a joint project than for separate ones.
- **Networking and exchanging ideas** – communication between parishes, often via the clerk, helps to reduce a parish's isolation.
- **Training** – keeping abreast of developments through a training programme, such as the one provided by the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) might be made easier by joining forces with other parishes in a group.
- **Neighbourhood Planning** – this model of locality working lends itself to the building of a neighbourhood plan for a group of parishes with similar interests and geography.
- **Community Based Projects** – in Copeland there are a number of projects, all designed to enhance the communities and provide facilities which might not otherwise be forthcoming from the Borough and County Council. See examples below.

However, not everyone sees Locality Working as useful or of benefit and there are a number of concerns:

- **Loss of identity** – small parishes fear being swallowed-up by larger parishes.
- **Conflicts of interest**
- **Pressure on councillor and clerk time**
- **Apportioning costs and contributions**
- **Geography and capacity** – distance and scale often mitigate against working together.
- **Representation on clusters by wider stakeholders**

What has happened so far on Locality Working in Carlisle District?
The Carlisle Parish Councils Association (CPCA) has for a number of years felt that there was merit in exploring Locality Working. Through consultation and involvement which was open to all Parish Councils, two clear messages became apparent. These were that the process should be led from the bottom up and not imposed from the Principal Authorities (an approach which was shared by the City Council) and that the process should be issue based rather than on geographical clusters.

This approach has led to significant benefits of parishes working together on single issue projects. Good examples include training and wind farm considerations. An issue based approach is useful as this will often foster the conditions that convince local people that making a difference is both possible and worthwhile. People will not take on responsibilities or become involved unless they really want to or can see the benefit.

However the long term benefits of this approach have to be questioned. The benefits which accrue are valuable but are not particularly sustainable.

The CPCA therefore took the decision in summer 2012 to re-look at the benefits and options around geographically based Locality Working. The first stage of this process was a workshop organised through the Rural Support Group (RSG) on 26th September 2012 at Cumwhinton Village Hall to which speakers from Copeland and South Lakeland districts were invited to share their experiences of Locality Working and to gather information on the benefits and pitfalls. This workshop was very well attended by Parish Councils from the Carlisle District. A summary of the experiences from other districts in Cumbria can be found in Appendix 1.

The other important development in Carlisle District has been the review of the operation of the Neighbourhood Forums undertaken by the County Council. This review has led to a different approach in terms of community engagement through the County Council and the formation of grant panels to consider community grant applications. At the same time the geographical areas covered

by Neighbourhood Forums have been reviewed to reflect changes in County Council electoral divisions. This has led to the formation of 3 geographical areas in Carlisle district for the purposes of community grants.

Examples of possible projects which could arise from Locality Working

Shared Clerk - This could involve several Parish Councils sharing a clerk. Each parish could contribute a proportion of their precept to fund a shared clerk who could provide clerk duties for a number of parishes. The advantage of this approach is that the shared clerk can gain economies of time and expertise in terms of sharing good practice between parishes and cut down on the amount of time each clerk has to spend on responding to consultations and new legislation. The other advantage is that Parish Councils may be better informed but still retain their independence.

Oil Buying Groups – Many rural communities do not have a mains gas supply and therefore are reliant on other sources, such as oil, for their main fuel supply. A number of different communities have got together to form oil buying syndicates. This helps communities achieve economies of scale and buying power to access reduced rates for oil supplies. Several communities in the Eden Valley have started an initiative (including Langwathby, Culgaith and Ousby parishes) and also parts of the Northern Fells group. Further details of the Northern Fells Group schemes can be found attached to this report)

Village Hall Co-ordination – Again economies of scale and sharing of best practice can be achieved through village halls working together. This approach has already been instigated in the Carlisle district in Wetheral parish where a Village Hall Development Officer was employed through use of external funding to work with each of the village halls in the parish. Successes were achieved in terms of negotiating savings for essential running costs, setting up a website to increase awareness and bookings and sharing information about funding sources. Further details about the project are attached to this report.

Some Project Examples From Copeland – there are a number of community inspired locality projects within mid and south Copeland. Here are some examples:
Blengdale Crossing, Gosforth – Developing better recreational access in partnership with Gosforth Parish Council, the National Park and Forestry Commission. New Bridges, improved paths, new picnic areas and interpretation will feature within the forest.
R727 The Viking Way – For over 20 years the communities of Seascale and Gosforth have demonstrated a need for this transport connection. The scheme is project managed by Cumbria County Council Highways Department with Copeland Borough Council involvement and has huge support from residents and partner organisations. This multiuser route will be suitable for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians and will be accessible to all.
Bootle Renew, including Wellbank – A former 12.5 acre MoD base to be transformed into a mixed use development with 46 homes, a hotel with spa facilities and business incubation zone. The scheme is currently awaiting planning permission. The scheme includes a new Public Right of Way between Bootle and Wellbank and the relocation of the community swimming pool to the school playing field at Captain Shaw's Primary.
Wasdale Head Visitor Point Project – Incorporating new car parking provision, landscaping and the redevelopment of the Old Wasdale Head School
Silecroft Beach Café and Whincham Ways – Replacing existing toilets with a new build café, facilities and small retail opportunity down to the beach front. The development will also incorporate improved parking and landscaping, picnic areas and interpretation. A complimentary cluster of projects, led by residents, involves reviewing the existing, and planning new, Public Rights of Way to connect the communities, services and facilities of Silecroft, Kirksanton and Haverigg.

Broadband Schemes – with the impending roll-out of broadband schemes across the District and the need for community involvement, a locality working model might be helpful to local parish groupings.

Next steps - the way forward for Carlisle
In order to move forward with the Locality Working discussion a number of actions are required. It is therefore proposed that:

- Initial Locality Working discussions are focused around the three geographical areas proposed as part of the Neighbourhood Forums review (copy of map and a list of parishes included in each area is attached)
- A copy of this discussion paper to be circulated to Parish Councils for a period of consultation.
- Consultation results considered by CPCA and RSG
- RSG produce report to Carlisle Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This report will also be circulated to parishes.
- If it is felt that further work should be done then there could be initial trialling of Locality Working in a chosen area based on consultation results

It should be emphasised that these proposals will not be forced on any parish or group of parishes. The success of this model of locality working in Copeland is worth following-up and it is hoped that a group of interested parish council members might make a visit to Copeland in the coming weeks to see first hand how it works to the benefit of parishes in that district.

Allerdale is currently looking at a similar model for Locality Working.

Appendix 1

Experiences of Locality Working in other Districts in Cumbria
A number of districts have already taken Locality Working forward using different approaches. Some have adopted a top down process with the structures imposed on parishes from above. Others have allowed Locality Working to grow more organically, encouraging parishes to develop synergies and form geographically, based on shared interests.

Eden District
Eden was chosen as a vanguard area for the Government's Big Society agenda. Eden's main approach to assisting the communities, particularly in the rural areas, is through supporting community led-planning. The initial focus has been on areas where community plans have been developed. These areas include the Lyvennet Valley, Alston Moor, the Upper Eden and the Heart of Eden.

The key to success of the initiative is working with the communities to help enable them to deliver their aspirations in the community plans.

Eden's approach is that knowledge and good practice is shared across the district and with other similar communities in the Country. As part of this commitment, they intend to develop a strand of work to assist individual communities to address issues in their localities and make the information on how it has been done widely available.

South Lakeland

South Lakeland District has taken locality working forward by forming 8 Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). LAPs are made up of elected representatives from the three tiers of local government: Local Councils including Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings, South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria County Council.

They are based on groups or clusters of parishes who agreed to work together on common interests. Amongst other things, LAPs influence decision making about the way services are delivered in their area.

Within the district there are a variety of facilities and services, and many areas have specific locally based initiatives. Alongside this activity there is a range of formal and informal networks that bring communities together and represent their views and interests. Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) are intended to complement and build on this activity and contribute to the objectives of locality working, using the diversity of local communities and existing structures to reflect local circumstances, bring people together and connect the range of activity within the district.

Copeland

Copeland District is divided into five localities, funded through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, using the term Local Partnerships. They are piloting their approach in three of the localities, aiming to learn what works best and then roll out the process across all five localities within the year. The remit is wide and covers all aspects of public service. Copeland took from the beginning a more bottom up approach. The localities link into the Copeland LSP.

Local Partnerships have been formed through the bringing together of parishes with a common sense of place, often clustered around a Key Service Centre. Parishes in localities often share the same concerns about public service delivery and socio-economic conditions and will be able to find local partnership approaches to addressing these. Partnership groups will be reflective of particular areas, but generally comprise elected (or co-opted) members of Parish, District and County Councils and encourage involvement from the private and third sectors. Each Partnership is tasked to produce a Partnership Plan.
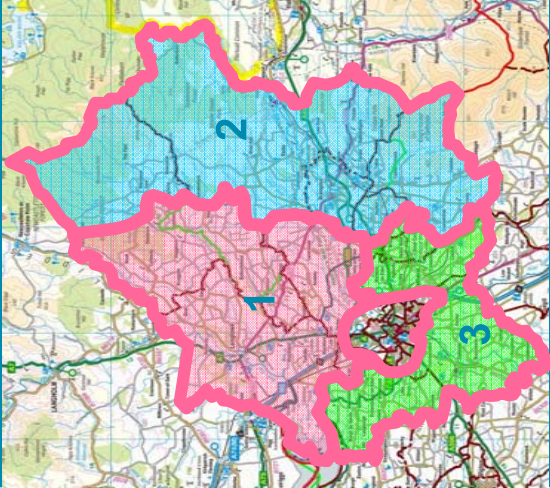
The Partnership Plan is the document that enables the Local Partnership of parishes with their borough and county members to set priorities for their locality based on evidenced need and strategic fit. Having established and agreed priorities, a clear set of objectives and a specific action plan can be agreed. The Partnership Plan will be refreshed regularly and the action plan section will be updated by appropriate partners, with each task being clearly owned. The Plan provides a framework and an assessment of local needs to help agencies make better use of community assets.

Ronnie Auld
Chair: Carlisle Rural Support Group and Carlisle Parish Councils Association

Rural Localities - Populations Based on 2001 Census

Parish Council Areas		Area 1 Longtown Locality 2	Area 2 Brampton Locality 3	Area 3 Wetheral and Dalston Locality
Arthuret	2434	x		
Askerton	162		x	
Beaumont	447			x
Bewcastle	411		x	
Brampton	4361		x	
Burgh By Sands	1143			x
Burtholme	184		x	
Castle Carrock	303		x	
Cummersdale	486			x
Cumrew	85		x	
Cumwhitton	293		x	
Dalston	2643			x
Farlam	590		x	
Hayton				
Hayton (Corby Hill)	1300			x
Hayton (Excluding Corby Hill)	880		x	
Hethersgill	382	x		
Irthington	712	x		
Kingmoor	407	x		
Kingwater	164		x	
Kirkandrews	447	x		
Kirklinton Middle	369	x		
Midgeholme	67		x	
Nether Denton	318		x	
Nicholforest	386	x		
Orton	383			x
Rockcliffe	733	x		
Scaleby	349	x		
Solport	168	x		
St Cuthberts Without	2043			x
Stanwix Rural	3043	x		
Stapleton	221	x		
Upper Denton	92		x	
Walton	278		x	
Waterhead	124		x	
Westlinton	359	x		
Wetheral	5203			x
	31970	**10010**	**8312**	**13648**

10657

Proposed Rural Localities

Existing Electoral Division Boundaries

Existing Electoral Ward Boundaries

Proposed Locality Boundaries