



CALC
cumbria association
of local councils

2015
Annual Report
Cumbria Association
of Local Councils



Chairman's Report 2015

CALC Chairman Cllr Ronnie Auld reviews his first year

A year ago our Chairman reported the formation of two new town councils in the county. With 12 months behind them we hope that they are gradually becoming a force in their communities. I had the good fortune, along with our Chief Officer, to meet the chair of the new Whitehaven Town Council. I hope that CALC can be of assistance to these new councils as and when required.

2015 has been a year of change for CALC, at least as far as the personalities are concerned. Keith Hitchen retired as chair at our annual meeting in January. He made a great contribution to CALC during his period in the chair and I would like to publically thank him for all that he did.

No sooner had I been confirmed as the new chairman but the then Chief Officer, David Claxton, quietly announced his intention to retire. While I had been expecting this towards the end of my time in office, his declaration came as a big surprise.

David has been an excellent Chief Officer for CALC and was very well



CALC Chair, Cllr Ronnie Auld

respected by parish councils throughout Cumbria. He was always ready to help councils with their local problems and ever willing to go and visit them to discuss things face to face. We hope that David and his wife thoroughly enjoy his retirement and that he is able, for many years to come, to continue to enjoy the hills, travel and, of course, his dogs.

The departure of one Chief Officer means that we have to recruit a new one.

During the early part of the summer we interviewed a number of applicants. Although many town and parish councils will already have been in contact and may have met David's successor, I can formally announce today that we appointed Samantha Bagshaw to the post. She has had a very busy introduction, coping with a relatively short handover and no let up in the flow of requests for help from councils. In addition, she has many county meetings to attend, all of which take time. Samantha brings many skills to CALC and was closely involved in the parishing of Penrith in her previous role with Eden District Council.

During the summer the Cumbria Leadership Board and the Chief Executives Group have been engaged in putting together a proposal to government for a Devolution Deal for Cumbria. Approximately £25 billion of private sector investment is proposed for the county. Furthermore local government leaders want to explore with government the potential for delivering public services differently to drive up standards and provide the necessary efficiencies. Included in this proposed Deal will be a Rural Productivity Plan to be agreed with

DEFRA.

Despite these developments, the government's austerity programme is continuing to have an impact on the principal authorities' budgets. Increasingly, parish and town councils are coming up with innovative ways of working with them to help maintain vital services to their communities. Footway lighting, bus services, running libraries and taking over play areas are amongst the assets and services now being delivered by Cumbria's hard-working and dedicated local councils.

CALC will continue to support parishes and keep up-to-date with everything that affects them, through its advice service, publications, a refreshed website and face to face visits. The parish and town council sector is of vital importance to communities.

I would like to thank all our members at town and parish level, as well as the Executive for keeping the Association moving forward. Together with our much valued part-time staff at CALC they give a great deal time and energy.

Councillor Ronnie Auld
Chairman, CALC



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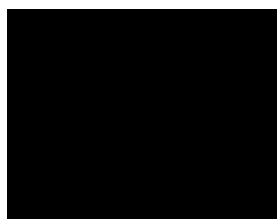
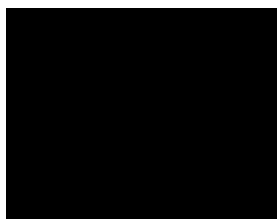
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CALC Activities in 2014–15

New Town Councils for Penrith and Whitehaven

It was a great pleasure to report to last year's AGM that new councils were to be established for Penrith and Whitehaven. Elections to these councils took place in May 2015 and we are pleased to say that the two new councils have both decided to become members of the Association. We have given advice to the councils before and following the May elections and provided training for new councillors to help them settle into their roles quickly. We wish both new councils every success for the future.

The establishment of these two new councils means that there are now 268 parishes in Cumbria served by a local parish council or a parish meeting. The urban areas of Barrow and Carlisle are now the only unparished areas of Cumbria.

Recognising the Value of Local Councils

After a long period of consultation, deliberation and refinement, NALC launched the Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) in January 2015 as the successor to the Quality Council Scheme as the benchmark for standards in the local council sector.

Under the LCAS councils are able to apply for an award at one of three levels.

The Foundation Award demonstrates that a council meets the minimum requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice. The Quality Award demonstrates that a council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. The scheme sets out the criteria to be met at each level and councils can progress through the three tiers over time. Councils of any size can aspire to an award appropriate to their budget and level of activity.

Conscious that there had been something of a hiatus in the transition to the LCAS, NALC gave all existing quality councils the option to receive foundation status without going through the accreditation process and at no cost. Some of Cumbria's parish councils took advantage of this opportunity.

NALC also launched the Star Council Awards during the year as a way of recognising and celebrating the achievements of parish councils. It is easy for the work of local councils, councillors and employees to be under appreciated, and we were delighted that NALC took this opportunity to highlight and publicise the important role that local councils play in local communities. There are nine award categories and we understand there are a number of nominations from

Cumbria. We wish all Cumbria's nominees every success when the awards are announced at the Star Councils Awards ceremony at the end of October.

Local Government in Cumbria

Against the background of principal local authorities needing to make savings to meet Government grant reductions, last year's AGM asked CALC to make representations to the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to commission a review of local government in Cumbria with a view to the introduction of some form of unitary local government. Without indicating what form such a system should take the AGM had in mind that any new local government system, comprising fewer principal authorities, would lead to significant savings in management and other costs at a time when front-line services were under considerable threat.

In response, the Secretary of State made clear that he was not minded to impose new unitary arrangements on Cumbria but said that he expected the existing local authorities to work together closely to achieve significant savings.

CALC's representative on the Cumbria Leader's Board has continued to play a part in discussions about how local governance in Cumbria can be made more efficient and effective. While at this stage there is not a consensus among the principal local authorities about moving to unitary local government, there is a readiness to look at other models which could bring advantages to Cumbria. The favoured approach is to explore whether Cumbria can put together a compelling 'devolution deal' under which

Government would agree to devolve a range of powers and responsibilities from central Government to Cumbria. Proposals for a transfer of resources, powers and accountability are being worked up for discussion by the Leader's Board. Government has already agreed a devolution deal with Cornwall which includes provision, for example, for franchising bus services, re-shaping further education training and learning provision for adults, and producing a business plan for the integration of health and social care services.

In this context it is important to note that NALC has made the point strongly that parish councils should be a key player in any moves towards the devolution of services.

Precepts

The setting of parish council precepts for 2015/16 continued to take place against a background of the County Council and the six district councils needing to make significant budget savings as a consequence of reduced grants from central government.

The total amount raised by local councils in Cumbria by way of precepts in 2015/16 was £5.07m, an increase from £4.44m in 2014/15. While this is a significant increase it includes precepts raised for the first time by the new councils for Penrith and Whitehaven.

The replacement of council tax benefit, funded nationally, with local council tax reduction schemes, administered by district councils, means that in addition to the precept local councils also receive a grant from district councils. Known as council tax reduction support grant (CTRSg), this grant is intended to

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compensate local councils for what is an effective reduction in their council tax base following the introduction of the new system. Since CTRSG was introduced in 2013/14 total payments made by district councils have reduced overall by around a quarter although three districts – Barrow, Carlisle and South Lakeland – have maintained the total payment at the original 2013/14 level. Overall CTRSG payments represent 6.8% of precept plus grant payments. Where the amount of CTRSG is a high proportion of a council's income – in 13 councils the percentage is over 15% (down from 18 the previous year) – the councils concerned are at greater risk from a reduction or withdrawal of grant payments. NALC continues to make representations to Government to require grants to be passed on to parish councils in full.

For 2015/16 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government did not set criteria which might prompt a local referendum on a parish council's precept but he did say the position would continue to be kept under review.

Elections, May 2015

192 parishes across Cumbria had elections in May this year with nearly 1,800 seats to be filled. In the vast majority of parishes elections were uncontested and where there was a contest perhaps not surprisingly this tended to be in the larger towns. After the elections there were around 330 vacancies to be filled by co-option, around 20% of the total. This does raise the question in some areas whether the size of the council is still appropriate.

CALC has made representations to the appropriate national bodies asking whether it is really necessary for candidates in uncontested parish elections to have to complete and submit an expenses return to the Returning Officer. Almost without exception candidates submit a nil return and the administrative costs of this requirement seem disproportionate and for little evident good purpose. The case for a return in contested elections is not questioned.

CALC supported parish councils in the period leading up to the elections by giving advice, including on good induction practice, and after the elections by reminding councils of key requirements relating to the Code of Conduct. We have also run a number of training sessions aimed at new councillors at strategic centres across Cumbria and in local areas by running a dedicated course at the request of a single council or a group of councils.

Parish Polls

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consulted during the year on proposals to modernise the law on parish polls. The consultation paper considered: increasing the number of electors required to trigger a poll; bringing the voting arrangements into line with those for other polls; tightening the criteria for demanding a parish poll so that the poll must relate to a parish issue; and raising awareness of the outcome of the poll and other miscellaneous matters.

CALC responded to DCLG supporting the broad thrust of the proposals which seemed to us to be well thought through and soundly based. We also made the point that there may be circumstances, in

sparsely populated areas for example, where it would be more cost effective, and more convenient for the public, for a poll to be conducted as a postal ballot only. We commented that the new regulations should allow for this possibility at the returning officer's discretion after consultation with, or at the request of, the parish council.

We hope that new Regulations based on the consultation proposals will be made soon.

Audit

During the year the Audit Commission was abolished under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The practical effect of this for parish councils is that all existing audit arrangements and appointments will continue to apply until the end of the 2016/17 financial year.

The main changes to external audit arrangements should take effect during the financial year 2017/18 although there are reserve provisions to extend the current arrangements if the changes cannot be made in time. It is expected that new audit appointments will be made after 1st April 2018 by a new sector led body, the details of which are being worked up by NALC, the SLCC and others.

The new body will contact all parish councils during 2016 to seek confirmation that councils wish to be part of the new central appointment arrangements for external audit or whether councils wish to opt out and make their own arrangements. The financial implications of these options will be spelled out at that time.

Councils with an annual turnover of less

than £25,000 – the vast majority in Cumbria – will be exempt from external audit from the start of the 2017/18 financial year but are subject from 1st April 2015 to the Government's transparency code for smaller authorities. Nevertheless smaller councils will still be required to appoint an external auditor in order to allow electors the right to make representations in relation to the council's accounts.

One of the key requirements of the transparency code for smaller councils is that certain key information relating to the council's business and financial affairs must be published online. Government has established a support fund to help smaller councils without a website to establish one but in the meantime we have offered, for a modest charge, the facility to publish the necessary information on the CALC website. 13 councils have done so to date.

Councils with an annual turnover greater than £200,000 (less than ten in Cumbria), as well as being required to have an external audit, are also subject to a Government transparency code relating to the publication of specified information. The code is recommended practice for parish councils which means that councils must take all reasonable steps to comply with it.

Councils in the middle (around 30 in number), with a turnover between £25,000 and £200,000, also remain subject to external audit.

Energy Related Developments

CALC has continued to monitor a number of energy related developments

during the year:

On the Managing Radioactive Waste Safely programme, we will be contributing to the Department of Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) call for evidence asking for contributions on how communities can become involved in the siting process for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) based on our experience of the earlier process.

The call for evidence is open until 4 September and we have encouraged parishes in west Cumbria in particular also to make their own contribution based on their experience of the earlier process in Cumbria. The 2014 White Paper, 'Implementing Geological Disposal', set out a voluntarist approach based on working with communities that wish to participate in the siting process. Formal discussions to start to identify potential sites will only begin once three initial actions have been completed: bringing development of a GDF within the definition of a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project'; a national geological screening exercise bringing together existing geological information relevant to the safety of a GDF and developing the processes for working with communities including: community representation, the test of public support, and details of community investment.

Another major project affecting parishes across much of Cumbria is National Grid's 'North West Coast Connections Project' which will take power generated in west Cumbria and feed it into the main supply lines for the National Grid. Following consultation last year National Grid (NG) has published details of the route corridor it proposes to take forward to the next stage of the development process. The

selected route corridor is made up of two parts: a route going onshore north from Moorside to a point on the existing grid network at Harker, near Carlisle; and a route going onshore south from Moorside across the Furness peninsula then under Morecambe Bay, emerging at the new Middleton substation near Heysham in Lancashire. NG's work will now focus on determining the actual path the new connection will take within its chosen route corridor:

National Grid will also be working with Electricity North West (ENW) to understand which of the existing pylons could be removed and replaced with its own higher voltage equipment which could include needing to build new substations. Some parishes are particularly concerned about the onshore route south and CALC has facilitated a meeting to enable National Grid to explain the background to the route corridor decision and how parishes can get involved during the next stage of the consultation.

Planning applications for onshore wind farms have given rise to strong feelings in local communities with views being expressed on both sides of the argument. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has announced his intention to bring in new planning rules which will mean that wind turbines should only get the go-ahead if they have been clearly backed by local people in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan. Where a planning application has already been made for wind turbines in an area where the local plan does not identify suitable sites, the local planning authority will only be able to approve the application where it addresses the planning concerns of the affected community and therefore has

local backing.

Finally, we have made parishes aware of proposals being developed by a firm to construct tidal gateways across the six main estuaries of the North West of England. In Cumbria this includes the Solway Firth, the Duddon Estuary and Morecambe Bay.

Neighbourhood Planning

Following consultation, the Government brought in reforms earlier this year to the neighbourhood planning process by reducing the time it takes for a neighbourhood area to be designated and amending the information required to be submitted with a plan proposal regarding its environmental impact.

Grants continue to be available to support councils wishing to undertake a neighbourhood plan and we have brought this, and other opportunities to secure external financial support, to the attention of all member councils.

Information from the DCLG about the latest developments in neighbourhood planning can be downloaded from the CALC website.

Rural Housing

We sent to all member councils during the year the Rural Housing Alliance's guide to affordable rural housing. First produced in 2010, the guide has proved a great way to allow parish councils to begin to understand how to get much needed affordable homes built in the places parishes want.

Many rural communities are approaching a watershed moment where, if

nothing is done, longstanding local families, businesses and cultures will disappear, damaging the very way of life that makes our villages so appealing. Maintaining a balance of income earners, household types and age groups is crucial to keeping villages vibrant and active. Developments of affordable rural homes help to achieve this balance and diversity.

To raise awareness of these issues in Cumbria, our representative on the Cumbria Leaders Board presented a paper to the Board at the end of last year which also drew attention to areas of good practice which CALC would like to see more widely adopted in Cumbria.

Parishes continue to be concerned about the impact of housing development on local infrastructure and we have invited all districts to consider with the County Council the contribution a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could make towards securing necessary public infrastructure to support new development.

Additional housing approvals have to be supported by necessary public infrastructure if our local communities are to be places people want to live and enjoy a good quality of life. We welcome the initiative taken by South Lakeland District Council to introduce a scheme during 2015.

What type of development takes place on an allocated housing site is of particular interest to parish councils. For example, Cumbria has an increasing elderly population and the policy aim is to help elderly people remain in a home of their own for as long as possible with appropriate support where necessary.

This could mean enabling elderly people in our villages to continue to live

locally but in more appropriate size housing or in extra care housing. CALC has asked all planning authorities to consider drawing up development briefs for larger housing sites so that there is an opportunity for parish councils and others to comment at an early stage on what would be appropriate development proposals for a site. Parish councils' experience is that it is usually too late to have much influence at the formal planning consultation stage.

supported, particularly the sessions for newer councillors and clerks. There has been an increasing trend towards delivering bespoke courses for a single council or a group of neighbouring councils although more specialist courses have to be delivered at strategic locations around the county because the numbers involved do not make it cost-effective to deliver the courses locally.

Developing Your Skills

Our training and development programme for clerks and councillors, known as 'Developing Your Skills', continues to be well

CALC Staff

During the year we said goodbye to our Chief Officer, David Claxton, who retired after five years' service with the

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Association. We've been very pleased to welcome Samantha Bagshaw as our new Chief Officer who has been quickly getting to grips with the wide range of activities and developments affecting the work of parish councils as reflected in this report.

Representing Local Councils

It is an important role of CALC to provide the local council view on major issues affecting all or parts of Cumbria. During the year members of the Executive Committee and the five district associations represented local councils' interests on many county and local committees on such topics as housing, transport, planning and broadband.

CALC continues to represent the interests of local councils on the Cumbria Leaders' Board, where Ronnie Auld has a seat, and on the Cumbria Chief Executives Group, which CALC's Chief Officer attends. A great variety of topics has featured on agendas ranging from the effective local governance of Cumbria, the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership, public health, Cumbria's ageing population and economic development.

In addition, CALC representatives continue to represent the Association on a number of local authority committees and bodies. The time and effort CALC and local council representatives put in is very much appreciated.

CALC also organised the election of three new parish members to the Lake District National Park Authority from June 2015. Mike McKinley, one of the parish members, has been re-elected as Chairman of the Park Authority.

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

All councils that subscribe to CALC automatically become members of our national association – the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). NALC represents the interests of local councils at the national level and continues to be very active in influencing Government thinking about localism, community empowerment and other issues of direct interest to local councils. Under the leadership of its Chief Executive, Jonathan Owen, NALC has continued to develop its communications to keep member councils better informed about national issues.

NALC is the Association's primary source of information and advice on legal matters affecting local councils. During the year NALC launched a fully redesigned website to make its information for parish councils more accessible. *Local councils Explained*, continues to be essential guidance for local councils and can be ordered through CALC or from NALC direct. There is a charge for this publication but most of NALC's publications can be obtained free of charge in electronic form.

We contribute to the policies and priorities of NALC through our representative on NALC Council, Keith Morgan. NALC's Annual Report can be found on the CALC website.

Regional Matters

The Association continued to participate in the work of the North West Federation of Town and Parish Councils, which shares best practice among the

four county associations in North West England, and raises the profile of local councils across district, county and regional boundaries. We also sit on the Northern Group of County Associations.

Advice to Councils

One of our main tasks continues to be to provide advice to members on governance, procedural, financial and legal matters. This is a major area of activity that takes up by far the largest amount of CALC staff time. Advice has been sought on a wide range of topics during the past year, particularly on governance issues and employment matters. Freedom of information and data protection matters also feature regularly in the CALC inbox and we organised a special workshop on these areas during the year led by the Information Commissioner's Office.

It is in this area of service that our membership of the National Association of Local Councils is very useful, particularly for legal advice and guidance which can be passed on to our members.

Information Services

Most NALC and CALC publications, leaflets and posters are now available on the Association's website. As a consequence relatively few items are posted to member councils. It makes sound economic sense for us to operate in this way to reduce our costs.

The CALC Circular, which is issued ten times a year, continues to be one of our main means of communication with our members. A significant number of individuals in partner organisations are now on the circulation list.

Information about local councils is regularly requested by members of the public,

probably arising from knowledge of the Association's existence through the website. As a membership association we are careful to provide general rather than council specific information and guidance.

Membership

The number of town and parish councils and parish meetings in membership of the Association continues to grow. Of the 233 town and parish councils in the county, 227 (97%) are in membership. Over 99% of the electors living in the parished areas of Cumbria are served by a CALC member council or meeting, and over 99% of total local council precepts are raised by CALC member councils.

District Associations

The CALC District Associations for Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland have continued to meet regularly; generally four times during the year. The agendas over the last year have covered a broad range of topics with many important matters discussed.

All the Associations have discussed the impact of reductions in budgets at County and district levels. Most district associations now hold three-tier meetings rather than meeting separately with the County and the district. Locality working arrangements are continuing to evolve across the County.

Other topics discussed at district association meetings were National Grid's North West Coast Connections project, broadband, highways, footway lighting, development plans and housing allocations.

CALC continues to convene Parish Forums in which parish councils in the Lake District National Park can come

together with the National Park Authority to discuss strategic issues across the National Park and the work of the Lake District National Park Partnership. We are conducting a survey of parish councils to obtain views on how we can make the meetings more effective.

Financial Support

Our audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015 are set out later in this annual report. We would like to thank our member councils for their continuing

financial support for the Association's work through their membership subscriptions. We are also extremely grateful to the following local authorities for their financial support which is greatly appreciated.

- Cumbria County Council
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Copeland Borough Council
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Lake District National Park Authority



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Who's who in CALC 2015?

CALC Officers (2014-15)

President

Mr Bob Mather

Vice Presidents:

Miss Jo Clarke, Mr Stan Simpson

Chairman

Clr Ronnie Auld

Hon. Treasurer

Ms Julie Wright

Allerdale District Chairman

Clr Geoff Smith

Carlisle District Chairman

Clr Jocelyn Holland
(to April 2015)

Clr Craig Nicholson
(from April 2015)

Copeland District Chairman

Clr Keith Hitchen

Eden District Chairman

Clr Keith Morgan

South Lakeland District Chairman

Clr David Peters

CALC Staff

All CALC staff are employed part-time

Chief Officer

Samantha Bagshaw (from July 2015)

David Claxton (to July 2015)

Parish Development Officer

Sonia Hutchinson

Parish Liaison Officer (Carlisle/Eden)

Claire Rankin

Parish Liaison Officer (South Lakeland/Barrow)

Amanda McCleery

Parish Liaison Officer (Allerdale/Copeland)

Chris Shaw

Executive Committee (2014-15)

In addition to Chairman, President, Vice Presidents, Hon Treasurer and District Association Chairmen.

Clr Ron Baldwin

Brough PC

Clr Douglas Banks

Langwathby PC

Clr Ann Byers

Dalston PC

Clr Leith Hallatsch

Windermere TC

Clr Jill Hay

Culgaith PC

Clr Leslie Johnson

Lakes PC

Clr Brian Kennish

Muncaster PC

Clr Rick Petecki

Embleton and District PC

Mr David Polhill

Gosforth PC

Clr Margaret Throp

Above Derwent PC

Accounts 2014–2015

Receipts and Payments Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2015

	2015 £	2014 £
Receipts		
Affiliation fees	43,915	43,050
Sale of Local Council Review	471	0
Sale of Publications	561	1,469
AGM	245	0
Bank Interest	46	54
Local Authority Grants	48,084	45,600
Training	3,465	8,066
Penrith Town Council Group	5,000	0
Sundry Income	1,495	562
	<hr/> 103,282	<hr/> 98,801
Balances at 1st April, 2014		
Deposit Account	82,598	79,544
Current Account	<hr/> 15,705	<hr/> 7,384
	<hr/> 98,303	<hr/> 86,928
	<hr/> 201,585	<hr/> 185,729

	2015 £	2014 £
Payments		
Insurance	662	645
Salaries and expenses	57,280	60,279
NALC – Affiliation Fees	14,238	13,963
Publications	55	1,423
NALC Local Council Review	294	312
Printing & Stationery	644	447
Postage and Telephone	0	73
Members Expenses	1,317	1,427
Honoraria	527	250
Meetings	3,890	1,314
Accountancy Fees and Bank Charges	659	907
Training	3,097	3,550
Penrith Town Council Group	7,475	2,520
Fingertips – Agency Costs	1,385	0
Conference	461	132
Sundries	186	184
	<hr/> 92,170	<hr/> 87,426
 Balances at 31st March, 2015		
Deposit Account	82,644	82,598
Current Account	26,771	15,705
	<hr/> 109,415	<hr/> 98,303
	<hr/> 201,585	<hr/> 185,729

We certify that the above Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2015 is correct and in accordance with the best of our information given to us and as shown by the books.

Saint & Co, Chartered Accountants, Unit 3, Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth.

Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) is run by local councils for the benefit of local councils. It assists councils in their day-to-day work and represents their interests.

CALC's aims are:

- Encouraging and advising good practice in local council management
- Increasing the contribution of local councils to community life
- Training and developing councillors and clerks
- Encouraging greater public awareness of the work of local councils

CALC's work is paid for by the subscriptions of its member councils and grants from the principal authorities of Cumbria and the Lake District National Park Authority.



CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL



www.carlisle.gov.uk



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