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# **CUMBRIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**



## **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025 - 2030**



## *Future focused, member led...*

Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) is a private company limited by guarantee that supports, promotes and develops local councils within Cumbria. CALC operates according to its Articles of Association, through two branches and a board of directors.



### Branches of CALC

1. Cumberland
2. Westmorland and Furness

'Local council' is a recognised term for town and parish councils. They are the first tier of local government and are statutory bodies. They serve electorates, are independently elected, and raise their own precept. There are 235 local councils in Cumbria and some 1,700 councillors, who are elected to serve their communities in these local councils.

CALC's vision is to enable Cumbria's local councils to fully represent and engage with the community they each serve, within the legal powers and duties available to them.

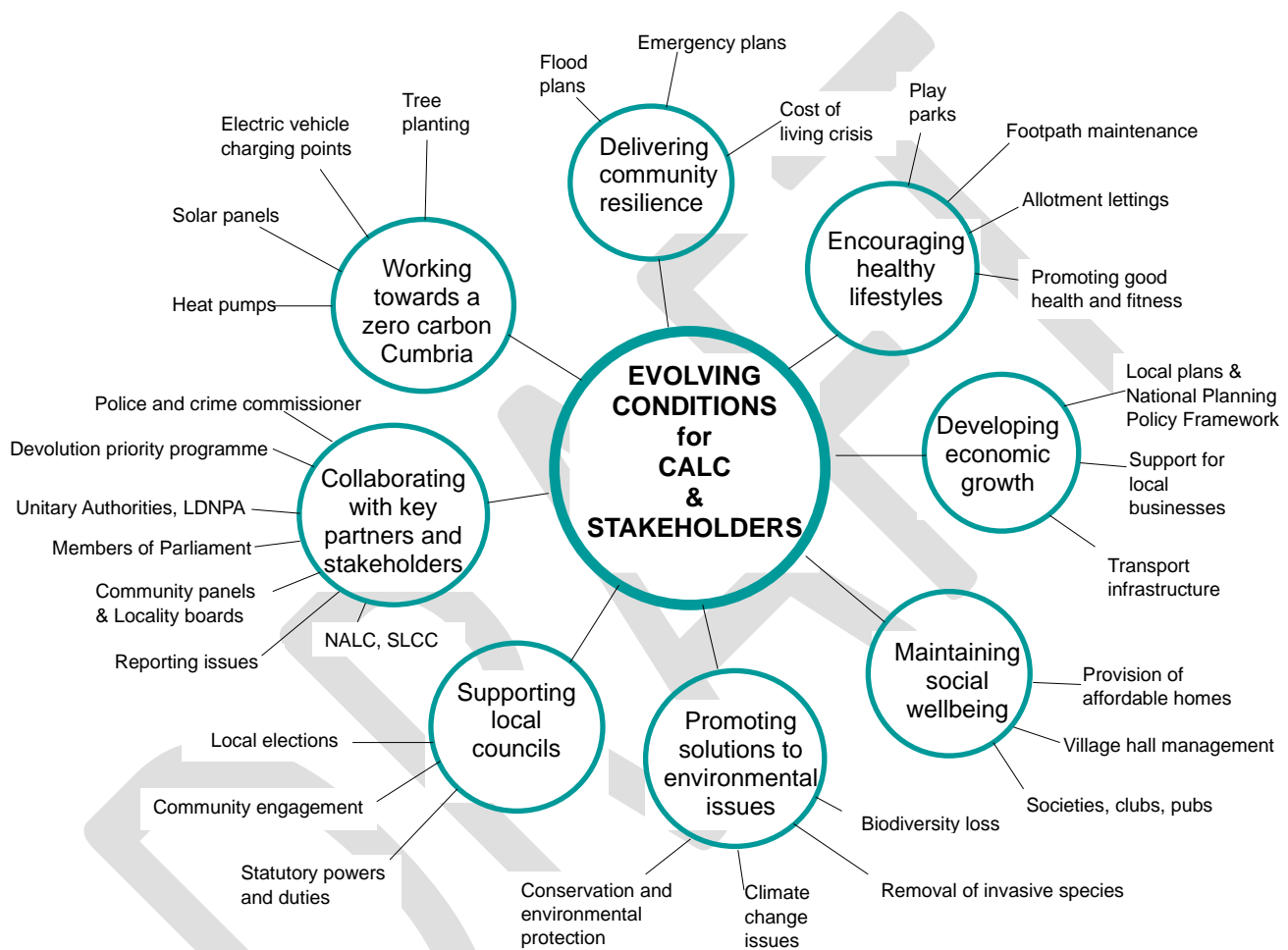
CALC works in partnership with organisations who represent the interests of local councils, including the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

We work collaboratively with all stakeholders, who include other tiers of local government and third sector organisations and engage with a variety of private sector companies for the benefit of our members.

## Our environment

CALC and the member councils it supports operate in a complex, changing world at national, regional, and local levels.

In 2025, we and our members find ourselves navigating through the evolving conditions affected by the need to plan for zero carbon measures, community resilience activities, healthy lifestyle promotion, and economic wellbeing policies. In addition, further devolution proposals, with a mayoral combined authority programme for the local government areas of Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness, as constituted in 2023, are but a few of the drivers for change.



These evolving conditions create unprecedented challenges for all organisations. CALC must be responsive to the changing needs of our stakeholders – our members, our team, our funders, our suppliers and our communities.

The pace of change is affecting how people throughout Cumbria live, learn and work. Our communities expect their local councils to move with the times.

## Our vision

CALC's vision is to enable Cumbria's local councils to fully represent and engage with the community they each serve.

This includes local councils understanding the needs of their respective communities and delivering appropriate events, activities and services within their legal powers and duties.

## Our performance

To achieve our vision, CALC will be future focused and member led to support, promote and develop local councils in Cumbria for the benefit of those who live, learn and work within their communities.

CALC will champion the role that local councils can perform within Cumbria, where the preferred delivery model for local decision making and service delivery is at community level.

To support our vision, CALC will facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, information and skills by local clerks and councillors to enable opportunities to be grasped and good governance to prosper across Cumbria.

We will measure our success by tracking both non-financial and financial performance indicators using a balanced scorecard to reflect our strategic priorities.

## Our strategic priorities



### **Maintain a viable organisation that is managed effectively and efficiently within a sound financial framework.**

- Continue to work towards charitable status
- Recruit and develop directors as required, harnessing their skills, knowledge and experience
- Appoint, develop and support employees with clear roles and responsibilities
- Deliver to the requirements of our funders, as understood through regular dialogue
- Understand and meet the requirements of our membership, recognizing that the diversity and aspirations of local council will vary
- Arrange and deliver events and meetings that reflect governance requirements and members' needs within agreed terms of reference and available resources
- Engage with other local organisations to share knowledge and best practice
- Work in partnership with NALC, engaging in 2-way dialogue and development of the sector
- Monitor and evaluate our practices, procedures and outputs with the aim of achieving our vision

### **Strengthen the membership to become partners of first choice for the unitary authorities and for their communities**

- Provide guidance for local councils on new legislation and the emerging priorities of our partners and communities through all forms of media
- Devise relevant, diverse training for delivery in more creative ways
- Encourage clerks to be competent and professional in their work, increasing uptake of the Certificate in Local Council Administration (a requirement for devolved services)
- Utilise effective communication tools to facilitate proactive and knowledgeable discussions and decision making with our membership

- Understand how additional support services (eg. wages, contracting, audit etc) may assist local councils and develop business cases to provide them

### **Promote the role of CALC and its members to our partners and stakeholders**

- Clarify the role of local councils to unitary authorities, together with their potential contribution within a devolved local authority model so that local council diversity and differing aspirations are respected
- Establish and maintain CALC and/or local council representation on the various locality boards
- Ensure that CALC and/or local councils are represented on key external committees by knowledgeable and effective personnel
- Promote the activities and achievements of local councils to the public and funders
- Raise the profile of the Local Council Award Scheme and its benefits

### **Our values**

Achievement of CALC's strategy will be underpinned by our values:

- 'Members first' – we are a membership organisation dependent on the engagement of our members.
- Nolan's principles of public life:
  - Selflessness: you should act in the public interest
  - Integrity: you should not put yourself under any obligations to others, allow them improperly to influence you or seek benefit for yourself, family, friends or close associates
  - Objectivity: you should act impartially, fairly and on merit
  - Accountability: you should be prepared to submit to public scrutiny necessary to ensure accountability
  - Openness: you should be open and transparent in your actions and decisions unless there are clear and lawful reasons for non-disclosure
  - Honesty: you should always be truthful
  - Leadership: you should promote, support and exhibit high standards of conduct and be willing to challenge poor behaviour

### **Sign off & approval**

CALC's directors reviewed their strategic development plan in March 2025 and approved this revised and updated version 9 at their board meeting in August 2025.

Mary Bradley – Chairperson of CALC Board of Directors

Sonia Hutchinson – Chief Officer of CALC



For more information about Cumbria Association of Local Councils

website: [www.calc.org.uk](http://www.calc.org.uk)  
 email: [office@calc.org.uk](mailto:office@calc.org.uk)

The key external trends affecting CALC and our stakeholders are:

Political	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local councils' powers, responsibilities and actions are framed by statutes of Parliament. Members change every 4 years but the councils as corporate decision-making bodies are constant</li> <li>• Post- Brexit, there are national, regional and local impacts with both positive &amp; negative implications</li> <li>• Consolidation continues for both Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness councils after Vesting Day in 2023</li> <li>• Mayoral Combined Authority proposals for Cumbria that are integral to the Government's Devolution Priority Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminishing financial grants from national government to local authorities make non-statutory service provisions less affordable resulting in limited delivery capacity and increasingly, the transfer of non-statutory service costs/assets to local councils.</li> <li>• Less availability of discretionary funding sources means it is becoming more difficult for local councils to secure money for their projects</li> <li>• Cost of living pressures continue to impact on private and public sector organisations, as well as people's wellbeing</li> </ul>
Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic changes – the age profile of local councillors can determine preferred communication methods, training times etc</li> <li>• Increasing leisure time and interest in lifestyles, health and well-being extends the scope of local council activities and their support needs</li> <li>• Cumbria has an aging population, pockets of deprivation and a wide variation in life outcomes.</li> <li>• Young people are attracted away from Cumbria, due to lack of appropriate housing and employment opportunities</li> <li>• Increasing cultural diversity bringing with it the need for equality of access to services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT and communication advances mean easier access to information, ability to promote and celebrate achievements, electronic circulation of reports etc. These in turn develop deeper engagement and stronger connections within society generally.</li> <li>• Internet banking arrangements are now available to local councils</li> <li>• More on-line meetings is changing the dynamics of decision making and encouraging interaction with service users dispersed across Cumbria</li> </ul>
Legal	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance requirements for local authorities</li> <li>• Legislation on management of public funds, transparency and accountability</li> <li>• Health &amp; safety legislation</li> <li>• Employment Rights Act 2026</li> <li>• Equality &amp; diversity legislation</li> <li>• Environment protection legislation</li> <li>• Safeguarding legislation</li> <li>• Risk management requirements</li> <li>• Requirements for robust governance at all levels</li> <li>• Review of National Planning Policy Framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened awareness of the importance and benefits of caring for the environment</li> <li>• Need to reduce carbon footprints in line with zero carbon ambitions</li> <li>• National programme for bio-diversity conservation and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy</li> <li>• Local councils need to manage their land and assets responsibly (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: section 40)</li> </ul>