



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Together we are **powered by communities**



**'A strategic
approach to
community power'**



Kendal



Cllr Virginia Taylor
Cabinet Member
for Sustainable
Communities and Localities



Sam Plum
Chief Executive



Foreword

We are delighted to share with you our strategic approach to Community Power **“Together we are powered by communities”** which will help us to create the conditions for communities to thrive.

Westmorland and Furness have a wealth of resilient and pro-active communities from which we can all learn and grow.

This shared vision and approach for Westmorland and Furness has been developed with the public sector, third sector and communities, to ensure that communities have greater influence over the places where they live and over the services that affect their lives. Community groups, local councils and the wider VCFSE sector will be key to decision making and service design, because solutions to some of the biggest challenges are often to be found out there in the community, not just inside institutions.



A community powered approach in Westmorland and Furness will mean communities are:

- Strong, vibrant, and resilient with greater social connectedness
- Happier and healthier with better long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.

Everyone should be able to shape and influence the things they want to happen to improve their lives, as well as their communities and their neighbourhoods. As an organisation we will support the creation of the conditions, connections, places and spaces where people can come together and use their gifts and strengths, to look out for each other and to create vibrant places where people want to live and where everyone feels part of their community. This approach is designed to build on the existing strengths in our communities and on what already happens all over Westmorland and Furness - to make sure we can all thrive.

Councillor Virginia Taylor
Cabinet Member for Sustainable
Communities and Localities

Sam Plum
Chief Executive

Contents

Introduction	04
Vision	06
Strategic approach – making our vision real	08
For the community, by the community	09
Getting alongside communities	10
Everyone reaching out, everyone reached	11
Delivery Plan – how we will get there	12
What success looks like	18
Together we are Powered by Communities: Delivery Plan 2024/25	20





Introduction

Westmorland and Furness Council has a vision to make this ‘a great place to live, work and thrive’ and understands that it can’t do this in isolation.

This strategy details how we want to create the conditions for community power to thrive in our communities and within the council. It is the start of an ambitious longer-term shift in our ‘ways of working’ towards a community powered approach.

This strategic approach is about communities having a greater say over the places they live and more influence over their lives. The outcomes sought are that communities are:

-  **Strong, vibrant, and resilient with greater social connectedness.**
-  **Happier and healthier with better long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.**

We have worked closely with councillors, officers, communities, partners, and New Local in the development of this community power vision, strategic approach and delivery plan. Drawing on best practice from the public and private sector.

This is a foundational strategy for the council, that will support the delivery of its vision and priorities, as detailed in the Council Plan and Council Plan Delivery Framework.



Having an approach to how the council works with its communities is crucial for all council services and is essential to support the delivery of the suite of Westmorland and Furness foundational strategies.

We have an ambition to reduce inequalities and discrimination within Westmorland and Furness. We want to be a council that understands and takes account of the varying needs and experiences of the different groups among our community, working hard to ensure all our customers, staff and councillors are included, supported and celebrated for who they are.

An Equality Impact Screening has been undertaken to understand the potential impacts of this strategic approach on people with protected characteristics. This screening has shown that no negative impacts were found for anyone with a protected characteristic. In addition, the screening has highlighted several positive impacts that could be realised for all protected characteristics. More detailed equality and diversity impact assessments will be undertaken as part of the work to deliver key actions in support of this strategic approach.



Vision

Community Power Vision



Together we are Westmorland & Furness

Where people are connected to the places they live, and to each other. Where they live healthy and happy lives, in neighbourhoods they are proud to call home.

Where residents enjoy spaces and places to come together. Get involved in community activities. Be creative. And support businesses owned by the community.

Where the things that get done are the things that matter to the communities of Westmorland and Furness.

This happens because the voices and choices of communities are heard through local participation.

Because local councillors reach out and listen to the priorities of different communities.

And because workers from the council and other agencies are given the chance to get alongside communities and do the things that they know will make a difference.



For Westmorland and Furness Council, this collaborative community power vision will support the delivery of some key priorities:

Council Plan

Confident, empowered, resilient communities.

Council Plan Delivery Framework

Communities are welcoming, inclusive and provide a good quality of life. They are proud of and care for their local areas. They are resilient, and their voices and choices are heard through local participation.

People feel connected in their communities and the range of activity available is widened, making a positive difference to people's lives.

The views and aspirations of communities are sought and influence the work of the council and other key service delivery organisations.

People are increasingly able to access help and support when they need it through their communities, reducing the need for them to access formal support.

We work inclusively with partners and communities to identify and deliver outcomes we all want to see.

Operating Model

Community Focus: We will focus on early intervention and prevention, working with individuals, community groups, parish and town councils, the voluntary sector and partners to reduce need for our services and improve health and wellbeing.

The vision is designed for all Westmorland and Furness communities, organisations, networks, and businesses who choose to support it.

It has been shaped by four guiding principles:



It should be **for, and make sense to, everyone in Westmorland and Furness** - from residents and communities to council staff, partner organisations, and local businesses.



It should be **concise** and **use plain English**.



It should be **aspirational** and **hopeful**.



It should **provide a 'north star' for the long-term** (10 years+).

Strategic approach – making our vision real

This strategic approach is for all communities, organisations, networks and businesses to support community power to flourish in Westmorland and Furness, guiding the long-term shifts needed to transition from an area with traditional services to being powered by communities. The approach is broken into three key themes:

For the community, by the community

– championing the strengths and ‘we can do this’ attitude of communities to improve their own lives and to support each other.

Getting alongside communities

– working together with communities and local organisations, as partners, to improve the places in which people live and the services they use.

Everyone reaching out, everyone reached

– enabling all communities to feel able to change things for the better.



For the community, by the community

For the community, by the community is about championing and unleashing the insights, strengths, and ‘we can do this’ attitude of all communities.

It is about communities of place, interest or experience having the agency to be authors of their own solutions, tackling the issues they care about and the priorities they are best placed to address. Ignited and backed by a caring and responsive public sector.



Communities and partners told us

Everyone that engaged in the conversations to shape the vision and strategic approach could name a practical example of community power that they were either involved with or knew about. This is about celebrating, supporting and catalysing it further.

The proposed framing for this strategic goal – ‘For the community, by the community’ - emerged from a series of conversations in which local partners and communities talked positively about the energy and action which already exists within the communities of Westmorland and Furness and how it is about further enabling communities to make change happen.

Getting alongside communities



Getting alongside communities is about working together to improve the lives of communities and the places in which they live.

It is about communities of place, interest or experience being invited to collaborate with local organisations to help shape services and inform decision making.

The role of public sector organisations is to develop the mindsets, skills and capabilities, and operating context to be able to work in this way.

Communities and partners told us

The call for working together to improve the lives of communities in Westmorland and Furness is powerful.

Westmorland and Furness is a place where people want to come together, to work together and to be 'in it together' to bring about change to local services and communities.

Collaboration, coproduction, a multi-agency approach, and listening to the lived experience of communities were consistent themes across engagement with local partners, parish and town councils, and councillors.

There are times, however, when current ways of working do not feel as collaborative as they could be. When communities, and the VCFSE organisations who work directly with the public sector, feel they are involved too little or too late in the process for it to be a genuine community partnership.



Everyone reaching out, everyone reached



Is about communities with often the least power, for example, people experiencing poverty, living with a disability, refugees and asylum seekers, young people, benefiting from a community powered approach.

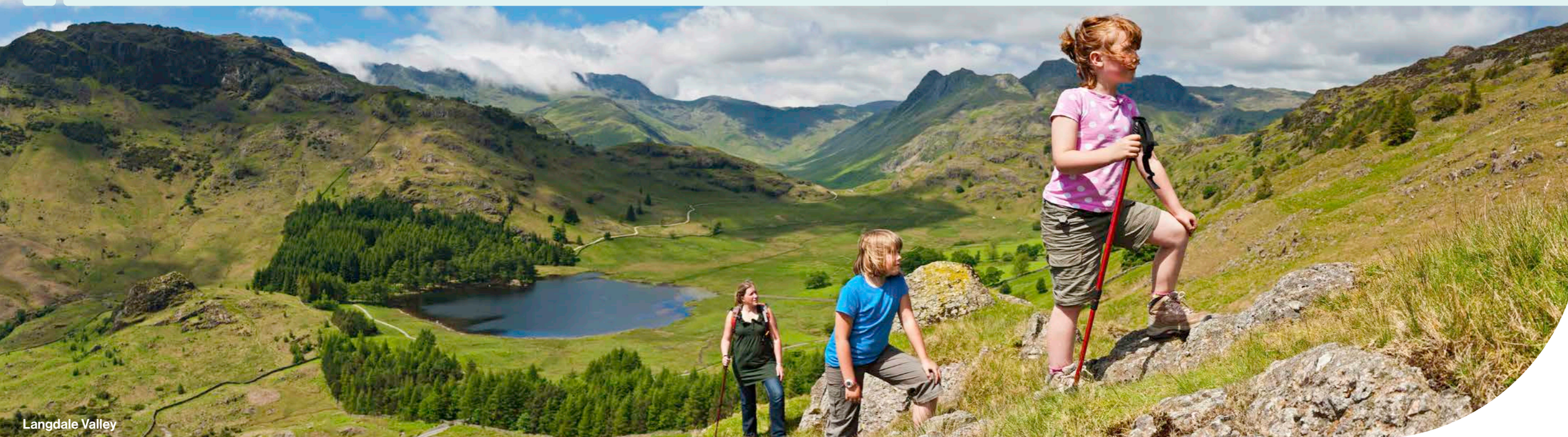
It is about enabling all communities to feel able to change things for the better and underpins everyone feeling like they can make a positive contribution to their community (For the community, by the community) and everyone feeling that their views and experiences can affect local services and decisions (Getting alongside communities).

Communities and partners told us

The theme of equity featured across many of the discussions held with councillors, partners and communities. People regularly talked of 'lifting all boats'. They spoke of the importance of everyone coming together and of creating a sense of 'togetherness', so that Westmorland and Furness is a place where everyone can reach out, as well as be reached.

This is about addressing inequalities by ensuring everyone can be involved and working to support a fairer and more equitable Westmorland and Furness through harnessing the support of a wide range of organisations, associations, businesses, networks and groups to help achieve this.





Langdale Valley

Delivery Plan – how we will get there

We have identified seven priority areas, together they will support us to make the changes required to transition from a traditional council to a community powered council.

There is some excellent work already being delivered which support these priorities, however we will also establish the actions needed to deliver on all.

1

Community-focused organisational culture



Elected members and senior leaders taking a leadership role in championing and modelling the behaviours for more community focused ways of working.

Giving permission to staff across the council to work in more experimental ways alongside communities, 'doing it the Westmorland and Furness Way' and foster a learning culture as things are done differently.

Getting the basics right – providing good customer service, including acting on feedback from any engagement activity with residents, communities and partner organisations.

Embedding a community focus in all policies, and strategies.

Measured by:

- Members and staff report a more community-focused organisational culture (self-reported).
- A growing body of evidence of community-powered transformation is identifiable across different services and areas of operation.

2

Clear, consistent brand and narrative



Creating an overarching brand and narrative, that is:

- clear, simple, and impactful – using normal language, not jargon,
- builds upon existing framing / communications for community powered ways of working rather than being something entirely new,
- able to work across diverse contexts and be relevant to all geographies, partners and communities. Building on the language being used in the culture work. Building on 'doing it the Westmorland and Furness Way' and 'together we are' messaging.
- positive, can inspire and be 'owned' beyond Westmorland and Furness Council.

Once agreed, active and regular reinforcement of the brand and narrative:

- through sharing positive stories of community power in action,
- informing core messaging used by the organisation's most senior leaders and in all key communications.

Any pledge to / with residents will align with the chosen brand and messaging and will be a shared approach 'we're doing this together'.

Measured by:

- Westmorland and Furness Council Members and staff recognise, understand, and regularly use the brand and narrative.
- Evidence of the brand / vision / strategic approach being adopted and used by partners.
- Communities have shaped the brand and messaging and know what it stands for.

3

Community powered pathfinders



Pathfinder initiatives will test and provide learning from new community powered ways of working, they will:

- advance community power and improve outcomes within service delivery or operations,
- generate insights about the opportunities and barriers to working in more community powered ways.

Community priorities and community involvement will be clearly identifiable in the pathfinders.

Measured by:

- Initial pathfinders selected and progressing well, with community priorities, service outcomes, and wider benefits clearly evidenced.
- A strong pipeline of pathfinder initiatives in place, reflecting growing momentum for, and interest in, community powered ways of working (subsequently implemented and evidenced).

4

Partner mobilisation



Council taking a strategic leadership role of the Community Power programme.

Fostering a place-based and system-wide approach, working directly with communities and with organisations across the public, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise, and private sector.

Setting out and executing a more intentional and ambitious strategy for convening, alliance building and collaborating with partners on community power.

Supporting partners to mobilise on community power by planning their own activity.

Investing in relationships and deepening trust between partners.

Measured by:

- Partner organisations proactively developing their own community power programmes / delivery plans.
- Growing evidence / sense of connectedness to a place-based approach to a community powered Westmorland and Furness among partners from all sectors.



5

Community focused skills, capabilities, and mindsets



Developing a comprehensive approach to building the mindsets, capabilities and skills required to achieve the ambition to shift towards being a community-powered council.

Supporting a long-term and agile learning and development programme for members and staff, with both conventional training and experimental, peer-based, 'learning by doing' approach.

Measured by:

- Increase in proportion of Members and staff who feel equipped to work in community powered ways.
- Level of staff support for community power.



6

Testing, learning, and evidencing



Foster an experimental, learning culture and a willingness and capability to act flexibly in response to community needs and priorities.

Focus on outcomes rather than outputs, external facing rather than internal facing change.

Creating space for reflection among those practicing change, capturing experiential learning.

Remaining agile and iterating engagement approaches and services designs in response to what is emerging.

Commissioning a formal evaluation, looking at the long-term outcomes and benefits realised.

Measured by:

- Increased understanding of what makes a difference / what is getting in the way of community powered practice among council leadership & staff.
- Strengthened evidence base of community power in action, the factors supporting this, and the benefits realised from it.

7

Resourcing plan for community power



Staffing and financial resources directed to help turn ambitions into reality.

Resourcing available to respond to immediate issues. – as dialogue is opened and relationships strengthen, a range of 'bread and butter' issues may arise requiring attention.

Resourcing available to support the implementation of the community power delivery plan.

Resourcing available to support the involvement of communities and the VCFSE sector.

Capacity building support available to enable some communities to be ready to step forward and work alongside the Council.

Measured by:

- Westmorland and Furness Council has the capacity to fulfil the final, agreed delivery plan.
- Shift in the profile of spend to more community-centred and community-led provision.



What success looks like

It will be important to understand how this strategic approach is making a difference within our communities and within the council.

For the community, by the community

Championing the **strengths** and **'we can do this'** attitude of communities to improve their own lives and to support each other.

We would expect to see:

- individuals and communities feel that they can do things themselves / that they can take action to improve their own lives and those of their community.
- residents and communities feel that they are part of a resilient community that supports each other.
- Westmorland and Furness Council / other statutory providers are felt to be responsive to community priorities and support communities to find their own solutions (being honest and open when this isn't possible).



Getting alongside communities

Working together with communities and local organisations, as partners, to improve the places in which people live and the services they use.

We would expect to see:

- residents, communities and local partners feel that public sector organisations draw on their insights and experiences to improve services / where they live; staff feel that they are working well with local residents, communities and partners to improve services and places.
- residents, communities and local partners feel listened to in the decisions being made by Westmorland and Furness Council / other public sector organisations (receiving feedback on / understanding why decisions are made even if not in line with views).
- over time there will be a shift in resource allocation towards prevention and to more community-based and community-led services, including a potential increase in engagement spend as part of the transition.



Everyone reaching out, everyone reached

Enabling all communities to feel able to **change things for the better**.

We would expect to see:

- residents and communities feel that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and involved, regardless of their background or circumstances.
- residents and communities feel that they can reach out for support and take action to improve their own lives and those of their community.



Together we are Powered by Communities:

Delivery Plan 2024/25

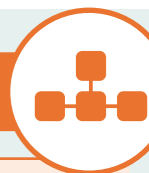
This delivery plan identifies seven key areas. Together, they support Westmorland and Furness Council to make the changes required to transition from a traditional council to a community powered council. Acting as enablers to creating the conditions for community power to flourish.

- 1 **Community-focused organisational culture** 
- 2 **Clear, consistent brand and narrative** 
- 3 **Community powered pathfinders** 
- 4 **Partner mobilisation** 
- 5 **Community focused skills, capabilities and mindsets** 
- 6 **Testing, learning, and evidencing** 
- 7 **Resourcing plan for community power** 

Some of the delivery plan priorities are already in progress; This delivery plan is an opportunity to bring the priorities together in one place, capturing work in progress and new areas yet to be started. The following priority areas will have action plans developed to identify actions for 2024/25.

1

Community-focused organisational culture



Why it is a priority

Organisational culture is identified as one of the key routes to community power.

Organisational culture was commonly **referenced in all discussions** with key stakeholders, local partners, councillors and staff. Sometimes explicitly and in overarching terms, other times with respect to specific components (e.g. attitudes to risk, customer service, permission to frontline workers).

Elected members and senior leaders have an important **leadership role in championing and modelling the behaviours for** more community focused ways of working. Organisational cultures are largely reproduced through emulation so every opportunity should be taken to model and demonstrate a community focused approach. This will be instrumental in getting buy-in and having a ripple effect across the council's workforce, as well as with partners such as Parish and Town Councils, VCFSE organisations and statutory providers.

Giving permission to staff across the council to actively listen, to work in more experimental ways alongside communities, doing it 'the Westmorland and Furness way' and foster a learning culture as things are done differently will need to be part of the longer-term cultural shift. **Moving at the speed of trust** with partners and communities will be key.

To create the conditions for trust to be built and maintained, and for community power to flourish, attention needs also to be given to 'getting the basics right'. This means ensuring **good customer service**, including feedback from any engagement activity with residents, communities and partner organisations. This will be a pre-requisite for deeper engagement and relationship building.

Embedding a community focus in all policies, and strategies, will further create an organisational scaffolding for community power to become the norm.

Evidence base

"My take would be that at Westmorland and Furness Council I've got absolute confidence in the leadership believing in Community Power."

VCFSE Partner

"It would make a massive difference across the community and all services if the council could actually give frontline workers the chance to do what we know would make a difference. We in Adult Social Care are restricted by lack of time, high caseloads, and never ending paperwork which could all be reduced if there was a focus on prevention and community focus and collaboration. This would significantly reduce the number of referrals for statutory services."

Staff member

"It's so much about relationships. Staff need to be given permission to work in that way."

Stakeholder interview

"There is too much bureaucracy at the moment, it takes up too much time, we can't get on with things."

Member

"Consultations – it's great to be consulted about things that affect my community but then you want to know that what has been suggested is being followed through as feedback isn't always given."

Staff

How we will assess progress

- Members and staff report a more community-focused organisational culture (self-reported).
- A growing body of evidence of community-powered transformation is identifiable across different services and areas of operation.

2

Clear, consistent brand and narrative



Why it is a priority

An **overarching brand and narrative** will support a community powered approach in Westmorland and Furness, creating visibility and ownership across a diverse range of geographies, partners and communities.

1. Both the brand and overarching narrative will be **clear, simple, and impactful** – using plain English, not jargon.
2. The brand will **build upon existing framing / communications** for community powered ways of working, rather than being something entirely new. It will be able to work across diverse contexts and be relevant to all geographies, partners and communities. It will build on the language being used in the culture work 'doing it the Westmorland and Furness way' and build on our 'together we are' messaging.
3. By building on our existing brand and creating the right narrative we can achieve something that is positive, can **inspire and be 'owned' beyond Westmorland and Furness Council**.

Once agreed, active and **regular reinforcement** of the brand and narrative will be crucial for enabling community power to become 'the way we do things round here'.

This will be assisted through **sharing positive stories** of community power in action, to both build understanding about what community power means and show that Westmorland and Furness Council/others value this way of working, and by the brand and narrative **informing core messaging** used by the organisation's most senior leaders in all key communications.

Any **Pledge to / with residents** will align with the chosen brand and messaging and will be a shared approach ('we're doing this together') rather than transactional ('you do this, we will do that') pledge, based on the findings from the engagement.

Evidence base

"More communication about (community power) successes and opportunities."

Member

"Develop a community power charter / protocol, with the community, and share it with everyone."

Member

"There's a risk it (a pledge) is a bit tokenistic. I'm not against it but we shouldn't think that's where the work ends. We need to do it through action."

Member

How we will assess progress

- Westmorland and Furness Council Members and Staff recognise, understand, and regularly use the brand and narrative.
- Evidence of the brand / vision / strategic approach being adopted and in use by partners outside of Westmorland and Furness Council.
- Communities experiences and stories (lived experience) will shape the narrative and bring community power to life ensuring all stakeholders know what it stands for and understand the benefits.

3

Community powered pathfinders



Why it is a priority

There is a clear desire to **make community power tangible**. To focus on the 'how' and 'doing' of community power.

The proposed **pathfinder initiatives** provide a good mechanism to achieve this focus on the practical, and an opportunity to test and learn from new community powered ways of working.

Work is already underway to shape the criteria for Pathfinder selection and a framework has been identified as follows:

- System
- Place
- Communities

It will be important that the pathfinders have a dual role. Firstly, to advance community power and **improve outcomes** within particular areas of service delivery or operations. Secondly, to **generate insights about the opportunities and barriers to working in more community powered ways**, what is required to take advantage of / remove those opportunities and barriers, and people's experience along the way. This second component is important to ensure pathfinders don't simply become a set of standalone initiatives. They instead have the opportunity to both drive positive change in their own right and inform the wider transformation towards community powered working.

Community priorities and **community involvement** need to be clearly identifiable in the pathfinders.

Evidence base

"Would like different models being tested."

Staff

"Building capacity of the VCSE should be a key component of the delivery plan and pathfinders."

Staff

"We need a long-term approach. We can test things out but they won't all work. Want to measure and demonstrate things are working but don't expect that it will show all results in 12 months."

Staff

How we will assess progress

- Initial pathfinders selected and progressing well, with community priorities, service outcomes, and wider benefits clearly evidenced.
- A strong pipeline of pathfinder initiatives in place, reflecting growing momentum for, and interest in, community powered ways of working (subsequently implemented and evidenced).

4

Partner mobilisation



Why it is a priority

Being a community powered place and delivering community powered public services is not something we can achieve alone. It requires a **place-based and system-wide approach**, working directly with communities and with organisations across the public, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise, and private sectors all having a role to play.

There is **firm support from partners** for Westmorland and Furness Council's strategic leadership of the Community Power Programme. This is a huge strength to build on. There is also a strong consensus that the Community Power Programme is a galvanising opportunity, something which all partners can buy into and contribute to, and there is energy and appetite to do so.

We can harness this by setting out and executing a more intentional and **ambitious strategy for convening, alliance building and collaborating** with partners on community power.

All partners recognise the significant geographic diversity which exists across Westmorland and Furness, together with the wide variety of organisations and local contexts with distinct interests, cultures and capacities. Given this, our approach to **mobilising partners on community power will be empowering**, mirroring our desired approach for working with communities.

As well as listening and involving partners, if effective, this will also involve partners planning their own activity on community power. In practice, this may mean other organisations adopt the strategic approach into their own organisations, strategies and ways of working or they could lead areas of collaborative action.

To succeed, this will require **investing in relationships and deepening trust between partners** and having the confidence that long-term benefits that will accrue to the Council, and ultimately to residents and communities, from working in this way.

Evidence base

"We'd be absolutely mad to go on this journey alone."

Member

"Work with partners. Do the job that's appropriate in each area."

Member

"Have community drop-ins – an opportunity to hear community voice on issues, services and local matters."

Community member

"Parish and Town Councils are very important for community power. They are democratically elected."

Member, WFC

"We will know community power is embedded when town/parish councils feel their views are listened to and woven into WFC policy decisions that impact daily community life."

Parish/Town Council

How we will assess progress

- Partner organisations proactively developing their own community power programmes / delivery plans
- Growing evidence / sense of connectedness to a place-based approach to a community powered Westmorland and Furness among partners from all sectors

5

Community focused skills, capabilities, and mindsets



Why it is a priority

A **comprehensive approach to building the mindsets, capabilities and skills** is required to achieve the ambition to shift towards being a community-powered council.

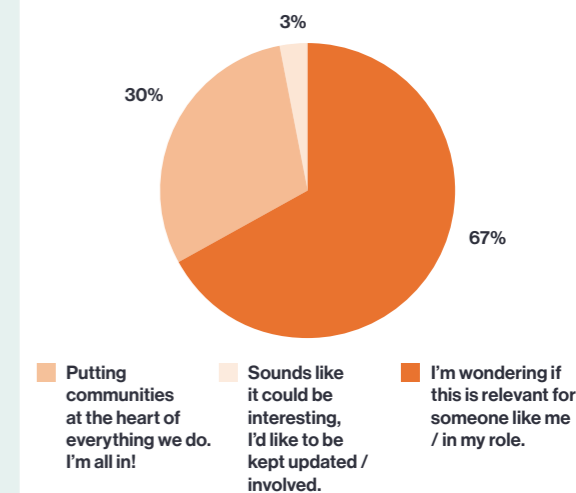
Supporting new learning and professional development, applied in practice i.e. some resources, training materials, and conventional training sessions will be helpful but priority will also be given to fostering a more **experimental, peer-based, learning by doing approach**.

There is a clear recognition from everyone involved in scoping this delivery plan of the need for such a learning and development programme for both staff and councillors. Indeed, **staff and councillors themselves identify this need** and the role it will contribute to a wider process of cultural change.

The learning and development programme will be long-term and agile. We expect it to undergo **a number of cycles of refinement and development** to constantly drive forward community power skills and capabilities over many years. Feedback from participants and learning about what is most / least useful will directly inform its development.

Evidence base

Staff are supportive about becoming a community-powered council (Staff Expo, Apr 24). There is scope to equip those who are already 'all in' with practice-based skills as well as support those who are interested / not yet sure with greater awareness and learning.



"It's a whole ethos thing. It needs to be across the board. It needs to involve all sorts of officers who don't necessarily think it's their role."

Member

"It's about the skills of 'how to work in a different way', but also empowering the workforce to give away power and control – because then you get back double / treble, by supporting people... it's about the art of enabling delivery."

Key stakeholder interview

How we will assess progress

- Increase in proportion and range of staff who feel equipped to work in community powered ways.
- Increase in proportion of members who feel equipped to work in community powered ways.
- Level of staff support for community power.

6

Testing, learning, and evidencing



Why it is a priority

A community powered approach necessitates an **experimental, learning culture** and a willingness and capability to act flexibly in response to community needs and priorities.

Emphasis is placed much more firmly on outcomes than outputs, external facing rather than internal facing change, and on how those shifts are enabled to come about (whether people feel listened to, able to participate, hold trusting relationships, believe they collaborate well etc.)

Because genuine listening and community-centred ways of working means that service responses and solutions cannot be known until we are working alongside communities, **traditional metrics and performance measures will not be the right tools** for the job.

More important is the practice of 'doing' community powered change. This can still be robustly reviewed and evidenced but the approach and methods will need to shift significantly. Creating **space for reflection among those practicing change**, capturing **experiential learning, remaining agile and iterating** engagement approaches and services designs in response to what is emerging, will all need to take precedence.

We are ambitious about our community powered approach. And there is the opportunity to become a leader in our community powered learning approach. This could include a more **formal evaluation**, and looking at the longitudinal outcomes and benefits realisation achieved.

Evidence base

"Continuous review and evolution will be needed, we won't get it 'done' upfront."

Key stakeholder interview

"Have it as a public initiative, not a council initiative. Don't claim too much. Don't go in with set expectations, let it grow, see what comes out the other end."

VCFSE Partner

"Resident and tenant participation and consultation needs to result in action to meet genuine local needs – not predetermined outcomes."

Staff

"We want to be able to show the effectiveness of the approach. We are going to use case studies, but also some kind of way of showing return on investment – really keen on that."

Key stakeholder interview

How we will assess progress

- Increased understanding of what makes a difference / what is getting in the way of community powered practice among council leadership & staff.
- Strengthened evidence base of community power in action, the factors supporting this, and the benefits realised from it.

7

Resourcing plan for community power



Why it is a priority

We are ambitious about our community power programme and it is important to consider how **staffing resources and financial resources** will be directed to help turn ambitions into reality. There are three core considerations.

First, **resourcing to respond to immediate issues**. A long-term goal is to mobilise communities and partners to themselves play a greater role in tackling the challenges they are best placed to address, alongside the Council continuing to play its role. However, in the short term, as dialogue is opened up and relationships strengthen, a range of 'bread and butter' issues will likely arise requiring attention (e.g. issues concerning highways, environmental waste, not being able to get a response from the Council). We will need to ensure we are ready to respond to these issues as rapidly as possible to build trust with partners and communities. This may not necessarily require additional resourcing but it will require effective coordination and someone to take ownership of the issue, coupled with a willingness by the recipient council department(s) to be responsive (i.e. behavioural as well as capacity).

Second, **resourcing to support implementation of the community power delivery plan**. This will require coordination of the whole as well as execution of the individual components. There is both strong support for both the existing Area Teams and community development officers, and a recognition that their time is already stretched – are they resourced enough to be able to implement the strategic approach and / or how might the Council work with its VCFSE infrastructure support organisations to fulfil this? Is this feasible through existing staff teams? Is there a case for a dedicated Community Power Delivery or Coordination Team, even if this is time limited?

Finally, **resourcing to support the involvement of communities** – and the VCFSE sector – to shift to community powered ways of working needs to be factored in. For example, there is widespread support for small funds/ grants to be provided to enable communities to lead action in their communities. Capacity building support may also be needed to enable some communities to be ready to step forward and work alongside the Council, with this support required over a longer time period in some communities than others and with effective capacity building / infrastructure support in place within the VCFSE sector to work alongside the council. In the short term this may require additional resources. In the medium-long term it is more likely to involve a shift in where and how resources are allocated.

Evidence base

When members, partners and stakeholders were asked what might get in the way of a community powered approach, key responses included:

"Money/funding."

VCFSE Partner

"Lack of investment."

PTC & VCFSE Partner

"Lack of officer capacity."

Member

How we will assess progress

- Westmorland and Furness Council has the capacity to fulfil the final, agreed delivery plan.
- Shift in the profile of spend to more community-centred and community-led provision.



Translation Services

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