

Your Reference:
Our Reference:
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The logo for Eden District Council features the word "Eden" in a large, elegant serif font. A stylized wavy line, resembling a river or a bridge, passes behind the letters "E" and "d".

District Council

Mansion House, Friargate, Penrith, CA11 7YG
Tel: 01768 817817

Dear Clerk

Devolution and Transfer of Assets

You will be aware the District Council is working with Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) on arranging for local areas across Eden to have the opportunity to take over the ownership and control of certain assets and services that operate within your Town or Parish. It is proposed that each Town and Parish Council across Eden should have the opportunity to consider whether certain local services should continue and if so, then be invited to take over the specification of what those services should actually be and deal with them including in the longer term raising the finance to pay for them. It is fully appreciated that not all Town and Parish Councils are the same and for some capacity or expertise is just not available to undertake day to day work on them. In those cases where you would wish the District Council Officers to continue to manage the provision on your behalf then we will do that but responding to your instructions on what the service will be and the payment for the services coming through your budgets.

Some of the services relate to actual land or property where the transfer of that would need to be undertaken by legal transfers. In effect whether we are thinking of amenity lighting or play areas the proposal is repatriating the activity back to you at a local level. This reflects what is also going on from Europe to the UK Government and in turn from it to local Councils through the description of devolution.

The Council has, since 1995, applied Special Expenses in certain parts of the District to raise money from local people to pay for some local services provided by the Council. It is considered that in the 21st century such decisions on what is spent locally should be determined locally. That is why from April 2018 the Council will no longer be applying Special Expenses.

It is very likely that by March 2022, the District Council will no longer have the funds to support these discretionary services and as a result the services will be removed. Raising this issue now provides the opportunity in those Town and Parish Council areas to determine which services are important to their residents and decide either to precept itself at that level to generate money to pay for local services or to not do so.

In relation to the repatriation or devolution of such services, within your own Town or Parish Council area, it is proposed that for 2018/19 100% of the external costs the District Council would otherwise have paid for the delivery of those services would be paid to yourself if you commit to taking them over.

For subsequent financial years as the responsibility for the service has moved to the Town and Parish Council concerned so the responsibility for funding the service would also move to it. However, it is fully understood in some cases that to do that all at once may be difficult to manage. As a consequence it is proposed that the following grants would be made available:

2019/20 - 75% of the funding

2020/21 - 50% of the funding

2021/22 - 25% of the funding

2022/23 - no more funding

What we have seen in Cumbria over the past five years is that Cumbria County Council has had to reduce services due to money not being available to pay for them. In 2011 consultation meetings were held about the need to stop certain services including closing toilets around the District to just manage the budget. Through some excellent financial management and business planning we have evidenced over the past five years we did not need to do that. Indeed we were able to not only continue those services but also provide grants to communities' right across the District to support a wide variety of activity and investment. However, reality is coming ever closer that a change is needed. By 2020 government grant to support local services will have gone from over a £1m a year to nothing. Savings will need to be made to ensure that the statutory services are provided.

We have raised the issue of amenity lighting over four years. The pressures coming from local areas to retain lights shows that it is these very local issues that need to be dealt with locally. Also we have raised the issue of devolution of services with Towns and Parishes over the past two years. In those discussions we have listened to what is being said. In some areas whilst there may be no appetite to take over services, that will lead to a local choice as to whether the service continues or not.

There is time now to implement change, we do not want to do what Cumbria County Council has had to do by just stopping a service. Here the choice on whether such local services will continue will be made locally by yourselves and the District Council will be giving you every assistance we can in that regard.

We fully understand that questions will exist in relation to this and there will be concerns and to help with this we have engaged CALC to work with the Towns and Parishes and look at the issue involved. There will be the opportunity for meetings across Eden at which Parish and Town Councillors can come to ask those questions.

The initial meeting will be set up by CALC who you can contact to discuss the devolution proposals and provide advice and support, please e-mail office@calc.org.uk or telephone on 01768 812663.

Yours sincerely



Jane Langston
Deputy Director Technical Services