

Annual Report



Welcome to the Annual Town Meeting of Penrith.

Find out about the key projects the Council has been involved in since the last Annual Town Meeting.

The past year has seen a new term of council following the elections held in May 2023 - with Councillors and Officers working hard to progress schemes of work for the benefit of the Penrith community.

The Council approved a budget of £575,665 for 2023/24 enabling the Council to progress the introduction of a revamped Grants Scheme allowing local community groups and charities to apply to the Council for up to £5,000 for various projects. A new Signature Events Grant scheme was also introduced providing funding for local events that have a positive economic benefit to the town and bring the community together.

Representing the people of Penrith is central to the operation of the Council - with the Council regularly responding to planning application consultations and participating in other consultations such as principal authority polices, expansion of school places, proposing different areas for 20mph speed limit zones as well as regularly reporting blocked or broken drains, potholes and graffiti.

The Council continues to work closely with a range of organisations to deliver projects for Penrith. Work is progressing on the Parking and Movement Study, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Project and the Borderlands Growth Deal. The Council worked closely with the Penrith Business Improvement District (BiD) to support greening in Penrith and deliver this year's Christmas lights display. The Council has also been working with and developing strong relationships with the new Westmorland and Furness Council.

The Penrith Arts and Culture group has launched a new website which provides a one stop shop for events in Penrith: <https://penrithartsandculture.co.uk>. This group has also facilitated the delivery of the Sounds Around Town outdoor music project and a Penrith Play Day for young people at Thacka Beck Field.

Increasing the community's access to information and improving transparency and accountability has also seen an improvement in the Council's communication through the implementation of an email distribution system, quarterly updates in the Herald and Eden Local and an arrangement with the Eden District Talking Newspaper to record readings of Penrith Town Council News which is distributed to visually impaired locals.

Read more about what the Council has been up to in this booklet.

Grants Scheme



Our Grants Scheme is designed to support local community organisations, charities, Social Enterprises and Community Interest Companies deliver services, projects and events for the benefit of the people of Penrith.

During the 2023/24 financial year, the Council also introduced a new “Signature Events Grant” to sit alongside our grants scheme specifically to support local events that have a positive economic impact and bring the community together.

The Council’s grant scheme has supported nine local organisations over the course of the 2023/24 financial year:

- Penrith Cricket Sports and Social Club: £1,000
- Penrith Football Club: £5,000
- Growing Well: £1,000
- Stomping Ground: £1,300
- Penrith Swift Group: £195
- Penrith Rotary Club: £372
- Riverside Group: £895
- Friends of North Lakes School: £1,000
- 2nd Penrith Scout Group: £2,090

The Council’s signature grant scheme has supported three local organisations over the course of the 2023/24 financial year:

- Winter Droving Festival delivered by Eden Arts: £5,000
- Penrith Sparkle delivered by Penrith BID: £4,965
- Penrith May Day 2024 delivered by Penrith Lions Club: £5,000

If your organisation has a project you would like us to support over the course of 2024 and into 2025, please visit: <https://www.penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk/council-finance/grants> for more information.

Working



With Partners



The Council continues to work with key partners and stakeholders to encourage and promote the social, economic, environmental and commercial vitality and cultural offering in Penrith.

The Council has refreshed its Climate Strategy and agreed an annual delivery plan. The Council has also recently partnered with the Eden Rivers Trust's Access to Eden project, accessing share of £2 million worth of funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for the benefit of the people of Penrith and those in the surrounding Eden Valley area.

The Council agreed to endorse its Arts and Culture Business Case submission to the Borderlands Place Programme Partnership Board to potentially draw down external funding towards town centre improvements. The Business Case submission relate to improving the Heritage and Interpretation in the town centre.

The Penrith Neighbourhood Plan is finally nearing completion and should be going to public referendum later this year. Once adopted the Penrith NDP will set out agreed policies endorsed by residents to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development within the bounds of upper level planning policy.

With the uncertainty surrounding the Penrith Business Improvement District (BiD) revote, the Council also worked in partnership with the BiD to support greening in Penrith and deliver this year's Christmas lights display. The Council tendered the works in collaboration with the BiD and committed to undertake essential infrastructure works which enabled this year's Christmas lights display to be facilitated in compliance with industry standards. As well as ensuring longevity, the infrastructure works have also allowed the BID to focus its resources on the design of the scheme, which included new lighting features and an extended lighting scheme to new parts of the town centre.

Asset



Maintenance



During 2023/24, the Council continued to maintain its assets to a high standard for benefit of the people of Penrith.

The Cornmarket and Bandstand has continued to be made available for public use. A series of live acts were facilitated throughout the summer. The Council has granted consent to local charities and community groups to host stalls, raffle sales and promotional events as well as consenting for the area to be used for outdoor hospitality.

Thacka Beck Field continues to see increasing usage since the creation of a path connecting the two sides of the field together - making it easier for residents to make their way into and out of town. The Council also facilitated a Penrith Play Day on the field during the Summer where over 80 people attended the day with children and young people enjoying building dens, making and creating, circus fun, basic woodworking and playing in Stomping Ground's mud kitchen!

Fairhill Playing Field also sees extensive usage - with the Play Area and expansive open space continuing to be a draw for all Penrith residents.

The Council has continued to proactively plan maintenance and upkeep of its assets and respond to reactive repairs and damage. Working with the Penrith Allotment Association, repairs were made to the Brackenber allotment track, the Musgrave Monument clock mechanism received its service to ensure that the timing mechanism remains accurate, repairs were made to damaged items at the Fairhill Play Area and new seats have been installed as well as current seats being repaired and painted.

Moving forward the Council is hopeful of further devolution of assets from Westmorland and Furness Council.