



Leader's Report

12 September 2012

(Deferred from the meeting of Council held on 18 July)

Report of the Leader of the Council

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Leader's report to Council.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To receive the report of the Leader of Council.

REPORT

1.0 Cabinet

Information on Cabinet matters is provided in the minutes from the Cabinet meetings held on 29 May and 3 July 2012, later in this agenda.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

There are no decisions to report since the last Leader's Report on 13 June 2012.

3.0 Leader's Comments

I attended the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee on the 25 May. This meeting was conducted via a video conference facility with Preston City Council. This worked well and will save money and time in the future.

The Lancashire Leaders' Central Sub Group held a meeting at Ormskirk on the 28 May. There was a short update on the Local Enterprise Partnership and on Health and Wellbeing Boards. I asked about the role our local Board can play and was told that they would be consultees.

Councillor Hanson, Mark Cullinan and I met with Eric Ollerenshaw MP on the 01 June to discuss the area. On the agenda were Neighbourhood Planning and the new provisions under the Localism Act. The Homeless Action Centre and their concerns about the Canal Corridor Development and a Lancaster Indoor Market update. Lancaster Castle was also discussed and we are to meet representatives of the Duchy of Lancaster on 9 July in Preston. The University as an Enterprise Zone is a new idea. The Council is fully engaged with the University in discussions about the Science Park and it is hoped that we can pursue further proposals.

United Utilities sewer works were explained and the need to improve the situation without excessive disruption. This work will go on until 2014.

In spite of the deluge, the Olympic Torch Relay was very successful and well attended. Congratulations to the organisers and to those who took part. The Velocity Festival went ahead and I hear that the Council received some praise for organising it. This could become an annual event.

Mark Cullinan and I attended the Local Government Association's Annual Conference in Birmingham at the ICC, a magnificent venue. The conference is the biggest local government conference of the year and attracts over 1000 delegates. There was much debate on issues such as the reforms in planning, local government finance, welfare and benefits and discussion around the role of local authorities in education, social care, self improvement and in response to police and crime commissioners. I also attended workshops on Housing the Nation, Surviving the Squeeze and using planning to deliver for and with your communities.

We were told that although local authorities have made significant savings since the Comprehensive Spending Review, any further cuts will impact on frontline public services.

An LGA report entitled "Funding Outlook for Councils from 2010/11 to 2019/20" projects that, by the end of the decade, town halls could become unable to provide road maintenance, library and leisure centre services because of the rising cost posed by adult social care.

A number of speakers made similar comments, including urging councils to start planning for post-2015; suggesting that local authorities should talk to their communities to find out what services they require, rather than what has always been provided in the past; and that councils should accept that they will be providing different services depending on what they have been asked for.

We heard some interesting speakers, but I felt that the main message seemed to be – congratulations to Local Government on doing more with less, but maybe we may have to do less with even less unless we are very inventive.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning and I attended a 'Visions Forum' breakfast meeting at the University of Cumbria on Friday, 29 June. The event provided an opportunity for us to find out more about the university generally, their aims and their activities relevant to the Lancaster area. We made contact with the management and the Vice Chancellor would like to meet us on a regular basis.

Together with the Mayor and Councillor Sands, I attended a visit to the newly restored Lune Aqueduct. It is said to be the finest and largest masonry aqueduct in the country and was built between 1794-96. Try to visit this amazing listed structure to see the fine restoration work. There is now a disabled access path and a new car park close by.

Don't miss 'Turn Back Time – The Family', filmed in Morecambe. The five part series started on the 26 June. Congratulations to our staff who made it possible, particularly Communications.

4.0 Other Matters

Cabinet minutes are attached at the end of this agenda.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meetings on 29 May and 3 July 2012.