



## Leader's Report

24 March 2021

### 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 meeting held on 9 February 2021. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 March 2021 and those of the additional meeting scheduled for 23 March will be tabled at the Council meeting on 28 April 2021.

##### 2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken in this period.

##### 3.0 Leader's Comments

#### COVID

Vaccine rollout continues at pace across the district and the Lancashire and South Cumbria footprint of our integrated care system. We are starting to see some impacts of vaccine hesitancy and our officers are working with the county council and the NHS to ensure that everyone gets their jab. Thank you to every councillor who has shared their experience of getting the vaccination, please continue to share other's stories as this is known to impact on others immunisation decisions.

The vaccine rollout has been an amazing success and as always, I'd like to thank our NHS, council officers, emergency services and armed forces, and volunteers who have made this happen.

Lancaster's infection numbers continue to fall, but this is not the case across the county. While in a relative sense these numbers are much improved, in an absolute sense they are still of concern and so we need to ask all of you to continue to follow the rules and to encourage others to do so. Even as the restrictions ease at the end of March, the message of hands – face – space will still be vital.

We also need to continue to manage expectations of residents and businesses and so it is important that you are aware that further spikes are expected – following the return to school, in the summer, and as we move into autumn. This expectation of further spikes is, in part, why there is five weeks between each step of the road map. Five weeks allows for the impact of changes to be seen and assessed, and if necessary, the next step moved back.

Work is also ongoing to support businesses and organisations to reopen and restart activities. It is important to recognise that easing of restrictions and reopening of council services increases the workload for our officers. As I do each month, I want to thank our officers for their amazing work through the pandemic, and to remind every councillor to address queries you have for officers through their directors. This request comes from the senior management team and is in part about members of the SMT being aware of the concerns of councillors, as well as them managing the workload of their teams and helping councillors get prompt responses by ensuring that queries aren't addressed only to officers who might have been redeployed or be on leave.

#### Address the climate emergency

The council has been successful in securing significant funding to build a solar farm on the old landfill site at Salt Ayre. The funding will also support the replacement of the Salt Ayre's gas boilers with air source heat pumps, external LED lighting and upgraded glazing to reduce energy consumption and improve overall energy efficiency of the building. As Salt Ayre currently accounts for approximately a quarter of the council's direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions this scheme represents significant progress on achieving our target of being net carbon zero by 2030.

Work continues on the responses to the People's Jury and how we take that work forward. We want to take action on those recommendations we have control over, but there is an interesting discussion about those we don't. It feels like there is more needed than just a letter, so as we continue to develop our community engagement platform, we are trying to think through how the People's Jury recommendations might be linked to other campaigns and how we might engage others in those campaigns.

Our work to address the climate emergency continues to be considered by all portfolios. The climate emergency review of the local plan continues in planning, housing has seen some great improvements to energy efficiency after some

refurbishment projects and to build high environmental standards into our plans for building new council houses, and the economic prosperity portfolios continue to work with local businesses and business representative organisations to support and encourage their work to not only meet the climate emergency, but the broader community wealth agenda.

### Build community wealth

This month's community conversation focused on fair work and well-being. One of the keys to building community wealth is to increase the number of residents who have good jobs with fair pay and the number of local businesses, organisations and institutions who offer those jobs. A number of local authorities have developed fair work charters and incorporated fair work into social value assessments for procurement. This is work we are continuing to develop within the council and the community conversation was part of the consultation process around the fair work charter.

We take a broad perspective on what wealth is in our discussions of community wealth. It's not just economic and we know the damage that focusing on Gross Domestic Profit has done and is doing as the dominant measure of the success of an economy. For us wealth is about many things including well-being, equality and sustainability, that's why it's not just jobs, but good jobs. And it is why the community conversations have all had a link to well-being.

It is also why we continue to work on issues of structural inequality. Our community won't reach its full potential while any member is held back by discrimination. That means that each of us has work to do to recognise our privilege, where we have it, and use what we do have to be good allies. We need to commit to working with those in our communities who haven't joined this work yet, or who feel left behind and threatened in these discussions. We also have to recognise that these structures defend themselves through powerful individuals and institutions, after all if everyone was committed, we'd have made more progress.

### Build community power

As will be discussed at a later agenda item – the government has opened formal consultation on the local government reorganisation proposals for Cumbria (and Lancaster). There is a significant problem in the design of the consultation in that our residents and local organisations are reporting being confused by the process. Along with South Lakeland and Barrow Borough councils we have written to the government highlighting our concerns and asking them to make it clear within their consultation that Lancaster is included. I have also raised this directly with the Secretary of State.

It is interesting that at the same time as we are highlighting weaknesses in government consultation processes, residents will address us this evening about the weaknesses that they see in our consultation processes. It is clear that through the community briefings, calls, conversations and consultation we and other institutions like the NHS are actively working to hear and understand the issues and concerns being raised across our district. But from the petition tonight we see

that there is still work needed to demonstrate that what is said has been heard and if it has been heard and understood how that has or hasn't influenced decision making. With planning, which is the focus of tonight's petition, some of that seems to come down to us being able to clearly explain the limitations on the scope of our decision making, and what else we might do in those situations.

We also need to find ways to move more clearly into spaces where we do co-design. Like many good plans, our intention to work towards a plan for the district (rather than just the council) was delayed by COVID, but it will happen this year and this should be a piece of work shared with residents, organisations, businesses and institutions. The aim of this work is to establish shared goals for the district and to bring together individuals and groups who share that goal, recognising that our efforts are likely to be multiplied through collaboration. We think the Sustainable Development Goals provide a useful framework for this work as they are already globally recognised, nationally committed to and in use by other organisations.

#### **4.0 Decisions**

The following Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 2 March 2021:

1. Confirmation of Article 4 Direction - Houses in Multiple Occupation
2. Update on the Housing LATCo.
3. Delivering our Priorities Q1-Q3 2020-21
4. Appointment to Outside Bodies

There were no Officer Delegated Key Decisions taken since the last Leader's report.

#### **Background Papers**

Cabinet agenda 2 March 2021