



## Leader's Report

29 September 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 13 July 2021 and the minutes of the meeting of the 14 September will be considered at the November Council meeting.

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

No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken in this period.

##### 3.0 Leader's Comments

3.1 Since July, despite the holiday season, normal council business has been intense, with a blend of face to face and online meetings as we feel our way forward to the best and the safest form of communication for different purposes.

##### 3.2 Covid 19 Work

The rapid rise in infections has continued although Lancaster District is about average for the country. This means continued work at county and local level to ensure communities are best protected. The return of schools and universities will have some effect on Covid levels but the rapid roll out of the vaccination

programme should also have a positive effect. The situation in which people use their own judgement on mask wearing has not caused any particular difficulties so far but we are considering how to develop our own messaging as a district

### **3.3 Support for staff**

Staff are continuing to progress the Working Well project in order to best create a new working arrangement that will suit both our overriding need to be the best possible service to residents and the need to create an effective working arrangement for both departments and the individuals within them. A large number of staff continue to be working from home. We recognise the great work that goes on within our staff networks and really support all their efforts to ensure the success of the council.

### **3.4 Major Decisions**

#### **3.5 The Bay Unitary**

We were very disappointed to receive the news that the unitary proposed by Lancaster District, South Lakeland and Barrow-in-Furness was rejected, despite it clearly having the most clearly expressed resident support and a well prepared geographical and economic strategy. The more formal arrangement to work together with Barrow and South Lakes has been stepped down but we continue to have informal contact and some cross district projects.

#### **3.6 Eden**

The Eden project team have worked hard to ensure the planning permission submission has been delivered according to schedule. This resulted in some very positive press coverage. As a set of council leaders, we are putting out joint publicity to show both our support and excitement. The project is now even more "shovel-ready". MP David Morris was unwilling to meet with us unfortunately, but we do hope to draw his attention to the Eden curriculum which is being followed within our schools and has great potential to improve pupil's engagement and achievement.

#### **3.7 Housing Infrastructure Fund**

Council agreed to go forward with the Collaboration Agreement with Lancashire County Council in August council. This is now in the very final review stages before being signed and returned to the county council. Whilst we accept this decision was disputed, moving forward we need to implement in the most efficient and consultative possible way.

#### **3.8 Lancashire County Council**

The government has announced it is interested in setting up county deals which will potentially offer all the devolved powers that metro mayors receive. The new county council leader, Cllr Philippa Williamson, spoke with Lancashire Leaders in September, following our input in July, to look at the areas on which we might co-operate more broadly.

### **3.9 Various Building Projects**

The Mainway Hub is now reopened, and social and information opportunities are being offered to residents. A fun day was run at Mellishaw in August in order to engage residents and begin the process of refurbishment of the site. This was very successful in its aims. The opening of the Caton Road Flood Defences is scheduled for 1st October and a number of councillors will be there to celebrate the event.

### **3.10 Community and Partnership Work**

There have been a number of developments in this area. The situation in Afghanistan led us to offer to support five families in addition to the five we had already agreed to in March. We had been unable to take more than one family due to intense pressure on rented accommodation. However, following my appearances on national television and Global Link's media inputs to local and northwest radio and television we received enough offers of accommodation to begin the process of accepting more Afghan refugees. The generosity and understanding of Lancaster District residents has been really heart-warming.

Morecambe Vision has begun a process of reviewing all the major requirements of a strategy to enhance the economic and community welfare of the area. There has been considerable support for Cllr Heath in undertaking very regular meetings and working through the programme. Highest Point Festival in Williamson Park went off very successfully. I attended on the Sunday and was very impressed by the organiser's safety requirements, the organisation of stages and stalls and the fantastic background work done by a team of city council staff drawn from departments across the council. There are always learning points and I know thorough review is standard to big events which is why we do them so well.

The Mayor and a number of councillors attended the 999 Emergency Services Day on 9th September. This was led by Canon Leah Vasey-Saunders the new vicar at the Priory. Her induction was at a well-attended service the night before. It was good to be able to speak to her at length and find she has experience of, and an interest in, support for homeless people.

The Community Safety Partnership met for its quarterly meeting, and I was elected as Chair. The new priorities for the partnership are being worked out with the help of police statistics. However, we are aware that anti-social behaviour is a high-level concern at the moment and has been picked up by the new Police and Crime Commissioner. We are consulting at the moment (see our KeepConnected website) on the reintroduction of PSPOs as one tool and expect this to be one element of next year's work.

### **3.11 Budget Preparations**

Cabinet has revisited plan 2030 priorities and the outcomes stated in our corporate plan. It has further met with officers to review budget situation. There have been initial discussions about how we achieve a balanced budget over the next two years and beyond through creating affordable priorities. We are particularly

concerned to ensure that revenue matches outgoings so directors are beginning the process of Outcomes Based Resourcing. However, this will not have progressed far enough to affect this year's budget decisions. In the interim officers and members are looking to create the most efficient possible running of priority services whilst supporting overall priorities.

I recently attended Overview and Scrutiny at their request and the financial position was an important element of the lively discussion. I expect that Budget and Performance Scrutiny in particular will have a role to play in our ongoing discussions of this year's budget.

#### **4.0 Decisions**

The following Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 14 September 2021:

1. To endorse the City Council's 2021-2022 strategy in respect of the High-Speed Rail 2 Project.
2. Lancaster City District Heating Feasibility
3. Economic Re-opening, Recovery and Renewal Framework
4. PSDS Funding Decarbonisation Projects
5. Delivering Our Priorities

No Officer Delegated Key Decision has been taken since the last Leader's report.

The following Individual Cabinet Member Decisions were taken since the last Leader's report:

ICMD5	Funding For Set Up Of Housing Companies - More Homes For The Bay	Councillor Matthews 29.07.2021
ICMD6	Referral to Council – Collaboration Agreement	Cllr Caroline Jackson 20.8.21 (Not subject to call-in)
ICMD7	Green Homes Grant	Councillor Matthews 25.08.21

#### **Background Papers**

Cabinet agenda 13 July 2021, 14 September 2021