

COUNCIL

Leader's Report

10 November 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

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting of the 14 September will be considered at this meeting. The minutes of the 26 October Cabinet will be considered at the 15 December meeting.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken in this period.

3.0 Leader's Comments

It has been another busy month for officers and members as we begin to make real progress with all the priorities lockdown slowed up as well as move tentatively back into face-to-face meetings. By the end of October, we have seen our Covid figures rise in line with national figures and considerable concern from hospitality venues, buses and shops about masks no longer being worn.

It has also been a sad month. Cllr Stewart Scothern died in the first week. On 14th October a good number of city councillors from all groups gathered in their robes at Beetham to give him a civic funeral.

3.1. Business, Community and Partnership Work

We have recently held a productive meeting with representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and the Business Improvement Districts of both Lancaster and Morecambe. Discussion was frank and thoughtful, and we will meet again in the new year. The Chief Executive and I were invited to an event at First Subsea a business on the Quay providing specialised cable connectors for offshore wind turbines. It was an interesting insight into the specialised businesses on the Lune Industrial estate and the skilled workforce they employ.

The Community and Faith Support network meetings, a feature of lockdown, restarted in September. In view of the possible effects both of rising energy costs, the end of furlough and the rise in Covid infections it was agreed we needed to keep channels of communication open with communities. We also agreed to run a community Covid briefing on Teams with input on community support, public health, hospital and police which was well attended. The constable of the Duchy of Lancaster met with me and the Chief Executive to hear news on the outcome of the unitary bid and more positively on the current Eden situation as below.

A successful ribbon-cutting ceremony and launch event was held for the Caton Road Flood wall.

3.2 Eden

We had the pleasure of a brief visit from DEFRA Minister Rebecca Pow on 6th October. She stopped in Morecambe to view the Eden site and Morecambe provided beautiful morning; sun, blue skies and views of the Lakeland hills. The minister talked about Morecambe Bay as a site of international environmental significance. She also spoke of the importance of reconnecting our urban population in the north west with nature through visiting Morecambe and the hinterland and was enthusiastic about the role of Eden in this process.

3.3 COP26/Environment

In the run up to COP26 we were glad to host WalktoCOP26 at the Winter Gardens on Friday 22nd October followed by a day long free event on Saturday. Many thanks to Cllrs Kevin Frea and Cary Matthews for being part of the organising team. I joined another of the Cop Walks, Camino to COP, walking from High Bentham to Kirby Lonsdale; a good opportunity to talk to some deeply committed environmentalists who had already been walking for thirty days.

Closer to home, the city council environmental team has been supporting the creation or extension of meadows in a number of settings across the district in order to improve biodiversity. I joined the planting session at Miss Whalley's field along with other ward and county councillors and look forward to walking past the results next year.

3.4 Cabinet

All cabinet portfolio holders have reported to me concerning the progress towards our corporate priorities achieved over the last 5 months. Covid continues to be a factor limiting officer time and reducing resources. However, against this backdrop considerable progress has been made. To make us more effective in our work as a team we have also met with a set of Local Government Association mentors. In

the coming weeks we will continue with this work in order to flesh out our own priorities and consider the way these mesh with the Budget discussions.

3.5 County

District Leaders/Lancashire Leaders have met together on the subject of how we might go forward with a county deal, using much of the work already done by consultants for the Greater Lancashire Plan. Lancashire Districts have a very clear agenda on which they agree, and their strongest common theme is climate change and climate action.

Lancashire also reported on its Peer Review which highlighted the improvement in the county's financial position and its new leadership.

3.6 Health

We were pleased to hear three areas in Lancashire received Changing Futures funding and that Lancaster city will provide the lead for the north area. £922k will provide 25 months of extended services to support the health of two hundred of the most vulnerable residents in the community. Our area will focus particularly on the use of people with lived experience to provide mentoring and support. We also saw the launch of the Health Equities Commission in Lancashire and South Cumbria and a meeting for members with New Hospitals Programme managers which offered some reassurance regarding fears over the loss of local hospitals.

3.7 HS2

Following the serious concern raised by both officers and members that the most recently published plans for HS2 did not show a direct service to London, a meeting was offered by HS2 Ltd. The meeting provided more detail on the way services are envisaged to work in Phase 2 and into the process by which the necessary parliamentary bill will progress. We will need to petition parliament regarding our loss of services, but doubt was expressed about whether we could do this when no work was being done at Lancaster station. We are now setting up a meeting with the minister of state for Transport.

Many thanks to all officers and members from all parties for your hard work and determination to support our residents.

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. Economic Re-opening, Recovery and Renewal Framework
3. PSDS Funding Decarbonisation Projects
4. Provisional Revenue, Capital & Treasury Management Outturn

The following decisions were taken by Cabinet on 26 October 2021: -

1. Boiler replacement - City Museum, incorporating Lancaster Library
2. Heat Networks Feasibility
3. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review
4. Provision of Internal Audit
5. Solar Array Installation
6. Proposed Property Acquisition

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:

ICMD8	Surrender of the ParkSafe Car Park Management Agreement and to Commence Operations In-house.	Cllr Gina Dowding (27.09.2021)
ICMD9	Fleet Replacement 2021-2022	Cllr Caroline Jackson (06.10.2021)
ICMD10	Changing Futures	Cllr Caroline Jackson (19.10.2021)

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda 14 September 2021