



## Leader's Report

24 January 2024

### 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

1.1 Information on Cabinet matters is provided in the minutes from the Cabinet meetings held 24 October and 5 December, later in this agenda.

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

2.1 The following decisions have been taken during this period by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

UB135	Procurement of Demolition Contractor	Published 06.12.23 Call-in Waived
UB136	Continued Financing of Demolition Contractor for Major Incident	Published 15.12.23 Call-in Waived

##### 3.0 Leader's Comments

3.1 Welcome members to 2024! I hope everyone has returned from the Christmas break feeling refreshed and ready for the year ahead. Sadly, one of our number has not joined us in this new year, with the passing of Councillor Paul Gardner.

Paul was no stranger to civic life, having served on this council in a previous term 20 years ago. He was also a former member of Carnforth Town Council and had served as the Mayor of Carnforth. His working life reflected his socialist values, variously being a mental health Nurse and an employment law paralegal – actively involved in work with his union throughout. He was a fixture of the local Labour movement, and his passion and activism will be greatly missed by many. May he rest in peace.

- 3.2 In December I joined Cat Smith MP and our CEO in a meeting with Simon Hoare MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), to discuss the A1 Supaskips emergency. The Minister undertook to explore the emergency response, interdepartmental and interagency responsibilities, and mechanisms with which Lancaster City Council might recoup costs expended in dealing with the emergency. A follow-up meeting and outcomes will hopefully take place before my next Leader's report.
- 3.3 Lancaster University hosted an event at the Midland Hotel on 6<sup>th</sup> December themed around 'Transforming Coastal Communities', seeking to examine the challenges faced by Morecambe, Blackpool and the surrounding communities and how these can be addressed by universities, enterprise, and both local and national political leaders, working in partnership. Cllr C Jackson attended the panel session during the day, and I attended the civic leaders round-table discussions in the evening.
- 3.4 At the last meeting of Council I undertook to write to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, urging them to use their international leadership to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the West Bank and in Israel. This letter was co-signed by the leaders of each political group within our administration and sent on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. It is worth reflecting on that despite the demands of the international community made of Israel, civilians are continuing to be killed, nearly 2 million people have been displaced and blocks on supplies of aid are causing a humanitarian catastrophe; meanwhile Hamas continues to hold hostages, hide among civilians, and fire rockets into Israel. The hurt and horror being felt by our own communities in Lancaster as the violence in that region is perpetuated seems set to continue. The international community can and must make political progress towards what we all want: an end to conflict and a sustainable ceasefire. We hope that our own leaders will heed our calls to contribute to finding a route to lasting peace in the Middle East.
- 3.5 In January I wrote to Cat Smith MP and David Morris MP asking them to support calls for increased funding for Council's following the announcement of the local government finance settlement. As highlighted by the District Council's Network (DCN), alongside increasing financial pressures in local government, district council's such as ours are seeing only an average 4.9% increase in core funding compared to 6.5% in local government as a whole. I have also once again highlighted the increasing cost pressures associated in dealing with homelessness. The detail of the local government finance settlement and its impact on the budget setting process are likely to form a significant portion of this month's full council meeting. Cabinet reports from 16<sup>th</sup> January will also contain much of the detail, alongside information about the actions identified in the Outcomes Based Resourcing (OBR) budget setting process. Therefore, I won't

comment further here, and defer to the Finance portfolio holder to present to council.

- 3.6 The Deputy Leader Caroline Jackson attended the NW Regional Leaders meeting in St Helens which met with the new LGA Chair Shaun Davies and discussed a range of regional concerns including the need to create regional leadership for Climate Change and Net Zero. She also attended the Lancashire Leaders' Health summit in Blackpool to receive evaluation of the Changing Futures project which has recently been given extended funding and the Lancaster University Coastal Communities event at the Platform which showcased successful innovation and change.

#### 4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 16 January 2024:

Corporate Fees and Charges
Budget & Policy Framework Update 2024/25 to 2028/29 including Capital Programme, Capital Strategy & Treasury Management Strategy

The following Officer Delegated Key Decision has been taken since the last Leaders report.

ODD 2	White Lund Improvement	Published on 8.12.23
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The following Individual Cabinet Member Decision has been taken since the last Leader's report.

ICMD 17	Application for Grant Funding from the Community Housing Fund for Lapwing Housing Co-Operative	Published: 29.11.23 Taken by: Cllr Gina Dowding
ICMD 18	Further Procurement of Litter Bin Sensors with Current Provider	Published: 18.12.23 Taken by: Cllr Joanne Ainscough Call-in Waved

#### Background Papers

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 16 January 2024.