

## **CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07 18th January 2006**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Cabinet Coalition formed after the Lancaster City Council elections in 2003 between the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties was based on an agreement on policies. These were taken from the election manifestos of Labour and Green parties and an election statement prepared by the Liberal Democrat party. The agreement thus has its basis in policies that have been put to local electors and thereby has democratic legitimacy. The Coalition believes that its programme should be available to the public and has published its priorities in two reports to the Cabinet. The Cabinet formally adopted the Coalition Priorities on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003. They were reviewed and revised in 2004 and adopted by the Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2004. These priorities have been used as a basis for the Corporate Plans of Lancaster City Council for 2004/05 and 2005/06 respectively.

For 2006/07 the priorities have once again been reviewed and revised. The Cabinet has decided to consult publicly and with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee before adopting the priorities. This document is the post -consultation draft and incorporates many suggestions from members of the public and public bodies that have responded. We would like to thank them for their contributions. We have also taken the opportunity to update the document in the light of developments in the last three months.

There are a number of changes. In order to sharpen the focus, we have sought to give more structure to the prioritisation. Previously there were only first and second category priorities. Now we have identified three tiers: overriding priorities, high priorities, and secondary priorities. We also identify a number of policies on which we believe we have made substantial progress and on which it is important to maintain what has been achieved, but in which we do not anticipate further policy initiatives are necessary.

### **1 OVERRIDING PRIORITIES**

In this section we identify three issues that we regard as the highest priority: the financial management of the council and the levels of Council Tax; improvements to cleansing; modernising the way we deliver Council services.

#### ***1.1 Keeping the City Council element of Council Tax increase to 5% or less in 2006/07 and 2007/08 and improving further the financial management of the council.***

The Medium Term Financial Strategy requires us to keep tax rises below 5% for each of the next two financial years. This was estimated to require recurring revenue savings of £1.3 million over two years, although the recent two year settlement has reduced this target.

At the same time we must ensure that the capital programme remains affordable. Unsupported borrowing must be kept to a minimum. It is estimated £1 million over 5 years is the most that could be prudently afforded.

The Government has given local authorities targets for efficiency savings - the Gershon strategy. The Council will pursue efficiency savings at least as large as

those in that strategy. The Council will seek to work together with other local authorities and public bodies to achieve such gains.

### **1.2 *Improving the cleanliness of our streets and public spaces.***

Although there has been an improvement in the performance indicators, it is recognised that the public does want to see higher standards.

We will use the information obtained from the Customer Service Centre pilot to improve and reconfigure the way the City Council delivers the service.

We will update and publish the Litter Strategy. There will be an increased emphasis on enforcement where appropriate.

We will use the additional powers under the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, when they become available, to strengthen enforcement action against dumping and other nuisances.

We will work in a joined up way with environmental wardens, PCSOs and the Arson Reduction team.

### **1.3 *Modernising the way we deliver all our services and making them accessible to all who need them***

We will implement a Customer Service Centre across all council services; use the information gathered systematically to improve the way we deliver services to the public; set clear service standards for all services; and improve and rationalise our accommodation.

We need to be sure that our services are accessible to all our citizens and customers who need them wherever they live. Rural proofing (Priority 3.6) is important to make sure both rural and urban areas benefit from improved services.

In order to deliver services effectively we need to ensure that the Council's workforce has access to training that will enable them to work in new ways.

## **2 HIGH PRIORITIES**

### **2.1 *Roll out further phases of the recycling and waste management programme until complete and investigate ways of improving recycling for commercial waste.***

Approximately half the households in the district will have three stream waste collection by the end of 2005/06. We should exceed the targets we have been set for recycling as part of the Lancashire Waste Partnership which in turn will mean the partnership should exceed the Government's targets. The MTFs makes allowance for rolling out two further phases. When they are implemented nearly 90% of all households will be covered.

This clearly links with Priority 1.2

There is clearly a need to improve recycling for businesses - and we will investigate ways of doing this.

**2.2 *Review the environmental warden scheme with a view to making it financially sustainable in the medium term and to link it closely with other agencies.***

We need to evaluate, with partners: the success of the new way of working with environmental wardens in the West End, Poulton and a mobile team; how this links to PCSOs with environmental powers; and how it links to the arson reduction team. Subject to a positive evaluation, we should plan -to mainstream- this activity and to make it available, where needed, across the district. We need to exploit opportunities to work more closely with the Police and other agencies.-  
Again links to Priority 1.2 and 3.8

**2.3 *Work with partners to reduce alcohol related problems throughout the district***

There is public concern about alcohol-related disorder in town centres and underage drinking in parks and open spaces. We also recognise the social and economic damage resulting from alcohol abuse.

Where the Licensing Act gives us powers to help reduce alcohol related disorder, we must use them. However, we recognise there is widespread concern that the Act will lead to extensions of hours without any clear offsetting gains in reducing disorder. New legislation is likely to introduce further powers in recognised alcohol disorder zones. If these powers become available, we must also use them.

This is a problem where no single agency can be effective by itself. We need to work in partnership with the Police, the PCT, and the County Council (Trading Standards and Youth and Community) and voluntary organisations.

**2.4 *Continue to progress regeneration schemes by:***

**2.4.1 *In Morecambe, progressing the West End Master Plan, regeneration of the Central Promenade Area, and Neighbourhood Management in Poulton and the West End.***

We need to have an implementation plan for Phase 1 of the Master Plan and to proceed with it as soon as possible.

We need to continue to implement the Poulton Neighbourhood Management pilot and to learn from this and to implement the Neighbourhood Element of the Local Area Agreement programme in the West End.

**2.4.2 *In Lancaster and Heysham, progressing the Economic Development Zone and, in particular, Luneside East regeneration.***

### **2.4.3 In Carnforth, progressing the Market Towns Initiative**

#### **2.4.4 Ensure a Canal Corridor scheme meets local planning objectives by using a master plan approach**

Centros Miller have been appointed lead developers. The master plan approach involves consultation with the public and stakeholders prior to final plans being drawn up. It is important that community benefits are obtained from the development.

#### **2.4.5 Making sure that regeneration encourages local small businesses and social enterprises and rural businesses.**

This is important to ensure sustainability of the local economy.

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### **2.5 Determine how we will influence the County Council to implement a continuing programme of road safety improvements and to encourage alternatives to car travel in the light of the ending of the Lancashire Highways Partnership**

Highways issues are very important in the district. There are demands for schemes such as 20mph zones with enhanced traffic calming and for work on safer routes to schools. There are ambitions to have Park and Ride schemes in the City to reduce congestion. The City has a cycling and a walking strategy and has recently become a Cycling Demonstration Town.

However Lancaster City Council is not the highways authority. Lancashire County Council has recently decided to end the Lancashire Highways Partnership. That means that the City will no longer have the capacity to design and bring forward highways schemes although it will remain a contractor.

It must be a priority to ensure that schemes such as 20 mph zones and the Cycling Demonstration Town, to which the City is committed, are completed. We need to determine, with the County Council, how to further proposals that can be developed and taken forward in view of the ending of the client side of the Highways Partnership. We will work constructively with the County, including through the proposed Lancashire Locals, to achieve this.

### **2.6 Improve consultation procedures, communication and involvement across the Council especially - with hard to reach groups and young people.**

Progress has been made in producing a Consultation Strategy and there are good examples of improvements in consultation, but there is still much to be done to achieve a high standard across the Council.

Links to Priority 1.3 through the Best Value Access to services review.

## **2.7 Rationalising and renewing public toilet provision while reducing costs.**

The current provision is unsustainable. Many toilets are outdated and costly to maintain. It is recognised that there is a need to renew as well as rationalise provision especially in Morecambe. Capital resources will be needed to achieve this and a prioritised programme needs to be identified. Toilets at the Arndale and Clock Tower are a priority.

## **2.8 Continue to work with Housing Associations and other partners to reduce homelessness with a particular emphasis on reducing homelessness in young people**

Increased staffing has enabled the Council to reduce the use of bed and breakfast and to undertake more preventative work in the last year.

Housing Associations are bringing more temporary accommodation on stream to help homeless families. This needs to continue.

There is a lack of provision for homeless young people and this needs to be a particular focus of policy.

The district has an above average rate of domestic violence and the purpose built refuge was closed some years ago. We need to determine how to respond to the lack of hostel accommodation within the district.

## **2.9 Seek to provide affordable housing in areas of higher house prices**

In some parts of the district, local people with modest incomes are being priced out of the housing market. This is a long-standing problem in rural areas and is becoming a problem in Lancaster south of the Lune. Because of the pressures on the housing waiting list caused by homelessness, there is also less access to social rented housing.

The Council should aim to increase the availability of housing both for those who have no realistic option except renting and for those who are being priced out of high demand areas. It needs to be clear in both its Housing Strategy and in the Local Development Framework about how it will try to achieve this.

The Council needs to make use of its planning powers to ensure that all significant developments include a proportion of "affordable" homes and to incorporate this requirement in the new Local Development Framework. There may be scope for increased numbers of discounted homes in areas of particularly high housing demand.

In partnership with the Regional Housing Board and housing associations, the Council should seek to use shared ownership and other means to provide more affordable homes.

## **2.10 Sea Defences**

We now have Government approval to complete Morecambe's sea defences it must be a priority to complete this.

## **2.11 Action on climate change**

The coalition takes the threat and challenges of climate changes seriously. We will examine ways in which the Council decision making and resource use can affect the determinants of climate change. The Council should improve its own energy efficiency and promote action by others. It has a good record in achieving energy efficiency in council housing. However, improvements need to be made in municipal buildings and we will work with agencies such as the Carbon Trust to do this. There are also alternative generation possibilities (photovoltaics, wind) which we will examine as spend to save initiatives. We will use the new planning frameworks to promote best practice in energy efficiency and renewable energy use.

Links to Priorities 1.1 and 1.3

## **3 SECONDARY PRIORITIES**

### **3.1 *Produce a new integrated tourism strategy for the whole district.***

This seeks to treat the district as a whole seeing Morecambe, Lancaster and the rural areas as complementary rather than conflicting. It needs to be related to data on the impact of the tourism on the local economy and to capitalise on the heritage of Lancaster, the traditional resort in Morecambe and the beauty of the rural areas.

The Festivals Innovation Fund has been increased and has attracted a significant level of interest. Festivals supported by this fund this must be related to the tourism economy

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Note, however, that part of Priority 2.4.1 clearly relates to tourism.

### **3.2 *Continue efforts to integrate the Council's leisure and sporting facilities and cultural services generally to improve both financial performance and access for all sections of the community***

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### **3.3 *Extend HMO registration to Lancaster and review private sector housing enforcement strategy when Housing Act comes into force***

Progress on this issue will depend on regulations under the new Act coming into force.

### **3.4 *Ensure that all relevant Council policies are “rural proofed”***

The Council needs to consider the impact of policies on the rural areas and specific rural needs. A start has been made but This needs to be consolidated. Good relations have been established with the LAPTC and Parish Councils.

### **3.5 *Clarify the Council’s role in the provision of facilities for children and young people and community development.***

New ways of working with County and other partners including the voluntary sector need to be established with the ending of Lancaster SRB funding. Community development is primarily a County function. However, there is a role for the City in the provision of informal leisure facilities (kickabouts, youth shelters) for young people throughout the district, in more formal leisure and sporting provision, and in community development on council estates. We believe the former, although they need to be sited sensitively, have an important role in preventing juvenile nuisance

The district also has a large number of playgrounds but many are in poor condition or do not meet modern standards. We need to provide a smaller number of high quality playgrounds in areas where they are needed most.

### **3.6 *Tougher approach to enforcement***

Many of these priorities require a tougher approach to enforcement or are part of such an approach (Priorities 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 3.9). The public often wants the Council to make more vigorous use of the powers available to it. We need to be seen to be taking action against those who break the rules on environmental protection, or pollution control or flout planning regulations as well as on issues such as dog fouling and dumping. The Council needs to review its policy on enforcement and to raise its enforcement profile.

### **3.7 *Sustainability Partnership Initiatives***

We will pursue the following Sustainability Partnership initiatives

#### **3.7.1 Further work to establish Farmer’s Markets**

We will seek to involve the NFU in promoting these further

3.7.2 Further parks to gain “Green Flag” status, following the success at Williamson Park.

Happy Mount Park is the obvious choice for the next park.

3.7.3 Improvements in information about public transport.

This needs to be pursued in partnership with the County Council

### **3.8 CCTV Extension**

We will examine the case for an extension to CCTV to Carnforth and to “hotspots.” This may require the identification of additional resources. It could only be done in partnership with other agencies.

### **3.9 Cemeteries**

The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee has identified a need to improve the Council’s cemeteries and is working on detailed proposals. We recognise that there is a need to increase spending and will find some additional resources for this.

### **3.10 Residents Parking**

The ending of the Lancashire Highways Partnership means that the City will no longer have the means to progress further residents parking schemes. We need to complete the current rounds of consultation and where agreed progress the schemes. Thereafter we need to determine with the County Council, how they will take forward requests for further schemes within the district.

## **4 OTHER ISSUES FROM ORIGINAL PRIORITIES**

Good progress has been made on these issues and improvements need to be maintained.

### **4.1 Continue to mainstream equal opportunity and diversity issues.**

### **4.2 Consolidate the improvements in the benefits service**

### **4.3 Continue to work in Partnership with the County Council to deliver the Museums Service**



**4.4 Continue to ensure the viability of the 30 year business programme for Council Housing**

**4.5 Continue to use appropriate powers to retain shops and post offices in villages**

**4.6 Continue to press for full broadband connectivity in our villages**

**5 NON PRIORITIES**

The Council has limited resources, which means that many activities however desirable cannot realistically be contemplated. Two have been specifically identified.

**5.1 Major expansions of the capital programme, dependent on the Council's own resources, especially to deliver "flagship" projects.**

Major capital projects will be dependent on partnership with other agencies to provide most of the capital financing.

**5.2 Direct revenue financing of new tourism attractions**

The improvement of the "public realm" is a major contribution of the Council to tourism and we need to concentrate on this. The Council does not have the resources to revenue fund new attractions and these should more properly be the role of the private sector.

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