

## **Executive Annual Report 2014/15**

### **Councillor Hamilton-Cox**

#### **Portfolio Holder for Property Services and Climate Change**

#### **Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)

#### **Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

Health and Wellbeing Partnership

#### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Property Services - Climate Change - Air Quality - Off Street Car Parking

#### **Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures:**

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•The Council's impact on the environment will be minimised</li><li>•Health and wellbeing if our citizens is improved</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Energy strategy in place and agreed</li><li>•Annual reduction in energy used by the Council's operations</li><li>•Annual reduction in carbon emissions from the Council's operations</li><li>•Facilitate long term improvements in transportation to improve local air quality</li></ul>

## **Progress made during 2014/15**

I wish to acknowledge the great work and support of the officers in Resources, Environmental Services and Environmental Health. In particular I want to thank Mark Davies, Nadine Muschamp, Gary Watson, David Hopwood, and Paul Cartmell for the clarity of their reports and briefing notes. My primary aim has continued to be to encourage a reduction in energy consumption across the council's operations. Not only does this increase the environmental sustainability of the council's operations, it's about saving to spend on maintaining services to the community as funding from other sources diminishes. It also sets a great example for the rest of community in reducing carbon emissions year-on-year. The solar farm is the flagship project of the portfolio and, subject to proving final feasibility and achieving planning permission, in or out of the council, I look forward to seeing its installation within the next year.

### **❖ CLIMATE CHANGE**

#### **(A) ACTIVITY WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

##### **Carbon dioxide emissions reductions**

2012-13 3.02 %

2013-14 2.37%

2014-15 - final data is not available but the evidence to date shows a continuing reduction in emissions.

The council's emissions have been restated for 2012/13 in order to account for material changes to the conversion factors provided by Defra for company reporting purposes.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the cumulative reduction in carbon dioxide emissions to March 2014 was 27.62% based on a 2008 baseline, against a target of 34% by 2020. So progress to date is well ahead of that target and everyone who has contributed is to be commended for their efforts.

Carillion was commissioned to undertake energy audits of selected general-fund properties such as Lancaster town hall and Salt Ayre leisure centre in order to identify

further interventions to reduce energy use.

### **Solar PV programme - General Fund investments**

The solar PV panels at Salt Ayre have now been operational for over 18 months. In calendar year 2014 the panels there generated at around 90% of the assumption in the original business case. The panels at White Lund operated at 105% of business case.

In February Cabinet agreed in principle to the development of a 5MW solar farm on its Middleton (former Shell/ICI) site and that it be managed in as wildlife-friendly way as possible. In doing so, Cabinet authorised officers to progress the project up to planning application stage, and approved the required budget to do so. Officers will report back on the outcome of the further detailed appraisal of the project in order to inform Cabinet's final decision on the matter.

### **Solar PV programme - HRA investments**

Following on from the progress made in the previous year, during 2014/15 PV installations were completed at an additional two "off-gas" council housing properties and further properties are being identified for possible installations in the coming years.

### **Energy Strategy**

During 2014/15, officers submitted drafts of the energy strategy to cabinet in June 2014 and February 2015 with a new set of targets which appear to me to be somewhat arbitrary. My view is that, as now, the target for reducing CO2 emissions should be congruent with that set out in the 2008 Climate Change Act for the UK as a whole.

As the original report to cabinet said in December 2012, 'using an Energy Strategy to plan ahead could help:

- reduce carbon emissions;
- lower overall energy costs for the council;
- protect against energy inflation;
- provide valuable income to the council;
- provide [long-term, environmentally sustainable] jobs and growth for the local economy.'

The strategy also serves to demonstrate, in practical terms, the city council's community

leadership role in promoting sustainability.

The original invest-to-save reserve approved in 2011 (and enhanced in 2012) is available to support the strategy.

Telemetry (tracking devices) have been fitted to all Council vehicles to assist with more efficient deployment, leading to fuel and emissions savings.

## **(B) CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY-RELATED ACTIVITY IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY**

### **Affordable Warmth**

The council continues to work in order to ensure the following minimum standards:

- Adequate insulation for the design and construction of the dwelling
- Fixed system of space heating that is controllable, understandable and accessible by the occupants, safe, properly and professionally installed; appropriate for the design, layout and construction of the dwelling and capable of heating all habitable parts, adequately and efficiently

In 2014/15 the Warm Homes Service continued with external funding from Public Health England. Additional funding was secured from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to target home owners in receipt of palliative care.

During the period 2013 to 2015 the types of interventions offered by Lancaster City Councils Warm Homes Service included the following:

- Fitting of goods in the home including LED bulbs, energy monitors, cold alarms, door trims, carbon monoxide testers, radiator reflector panels and solar-powered PIR floodlights
- Advice and assistance in accessing funding and grants for energy improvement works
- Assistance in obtaining top up funding where there is a shortfall in grant funding for energy improvement works
- Boiler and gas fire servicing
- Repairs or replacement of heating systems
- Upgrading heating controls, timers and programmers.

- Provision of temporary heaters in emergencies
- Assistance with payment of fuel debt
- Electrical repairs to enable the installation of heating systems.
- Replacement or repair of draughty windows and doors.
- General property repairs and improvements to make homes warmer and easier to heat.
- Enhanced Insulation and draught proofing throughout the home.
- Assistance with clearance of lofts to allow insulation to be installed
- Any work which prevents slips, trips, falls and other home safety type works.
- Measures around the home to assist residents living with dementia.
- Provision of Salt Sticks for gritting of paths and the fitting of handrails to prevent slips in icy weather.

Depending upon the council being able to secure the necessary external funding from Public Health/CCG in future years, it is intended that this service will continue for as long as possible.

Lancashire authorities are working together to target homes in most need in Lancashire under the Cosy Homes in Lancashire scheme (in which Storey-based LESS is the lead partner) in order to maximise take-up of energy efficiency measures and ensure economies of scale. Over 1,000 letters have been delivered to homes across the district where families may be in fuel poverty and/or living in properties which are needing interventions to improve energy efficiency.

### **Green Partnerships Award**

During 2014/15 Lancaster City Council has contributed £2000.00 to the Green Partnership awards for environmental projects, match-funded by the county council. To date during the 2014/15 financial year this has seen 9 projects in the district receive awards ranging in size up to £500.00

## **❖ PROPERTY SERVICES**

### **Organisational change**

Work has continued within the property shared service on further development and

improvements to the Council's asset management database. The key areas focused upon during the year have been property-related health and safety, rationalisation of service contracts and the transparency agenda. The ultimate aim is still to provide much-improved management information and systems to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and assist Property Group in assuming the role of corporate landlord.

### **Building works**

2014/15 has seen the 5 year capital programme for the property works identified through the 2012 condition surveys move into its second year. Having dealt with the urgent high priority works and repairs across the property portfolio during 2013/14, the second year of the programme has been more focused on specific buildings. Officers consider that targeting a fewer number of buildings is a more efficient way of working and once all the works on a particular building are complete it can then be moved into the planned maintenance regime, which will deliver significant potential savings subsequently and improve the accuracy of financial planning in the years to come.

Yet again, Property Services is to be commended for its the quarterly reports of capital expenditure.

### **Commercial land and buildings**

At the beginning of the 2014/15 financial year the occupation rate across the Council's operational commercial property portfolio was 83% and by the end it had improved by 10% to an occupancy rate of around 93% (though this has been helped by St.Leonard's House, as it is no longer categorised as a commercial property for rent). This represents a reasonable position overall when considering the difficult financial climate and lack of demand for office and retail space.

Working with the Lancashire Regeneration Property Partnership, aside from the solar farm project mentioned earlier another major development proposal has been to convert St. Leonard's House to student/young worker accommodation. Cabinet authorised officers to negotiate with strategic partners on a potential transfer of ownership, and in parallel, to protect the Council's position, to undertake wider soft market testing to include adjacent property owners. A final decision is expected to be taken by Cabinet during 2015/16.

### **Capital receipts**

Major sources of receipts, which became payable subject to detailed agreement on timing, are from council-owned land at Nightingale Hall farm and at Lancaster Leisure Park.

### **Bailrigg Health Innovation campus**

Cabinet agreed to transfer a 24-acre site on Bailrigg Lane to Lancaster University as part of ambitious plans for a Health Innovation Campus. I and Cllr Barry abstained but on the limited basis that in transferring the land the scope of development was not circumscribed in order to prevent residential development.

The city council had acquired the land in 2009 with funding provided by the North West Development Agency, in order to facilitate the development of the land as a science park. The land purchase was subject to a funding agreement with the NWDA and a number of covenants in favour of the previous landowner (Bailrigg Farm Trustees). The Health Innovation Campus appears to include extension of the campus with the relocation of the faculty of health and medicine; development of research facilities possibly in conjunction with the NHS and potential commercial partners; and science park-style development.

The transfer is seen as enabling the university to make progress on the project by approaching investors and developers as freeholder.

## **❖ OFF-STREET CAR PARKING**

Cabinet decided to freeze parking charges in 2015-16, partly to help with visitor perception in the wake of the extensive disruption caused by United Utilities and partly to ensure that the differential between on-street and off-street charges was maintained.

In the light of the disruption car park revenues have held up in Lancaster surprisingly well though the revised gross revenue budget for 2014-15 was reduced against the original budget to recognise a likely but relatively modest shortfall (less than one per cent).

Cashless parking was to have been introduced at the end of April 2014. Following

extensive technical difficulties the scheme is being tested at the time of writing; and subject to successful testing it's ready to go live This will allow customers to register for the 'pay by phone' service to buy their parking period avoiding the need for change and with the option to 'top up' from wherever they are and not having to return to the car park.

In January cabinet mandated officers to look at making monthly parking permits easier to obtain – either online or by 'phone in order to try to encourage greater use by commuters.

## **ON-STREET PARKING**

A further year on, Lancashire Highways is still reviewing the arrangements for visitor parking in the residents' parking zones. The aim is to make visitor parking more user-friendly and less expensive to administer whilst maintaining control over the use of the permits to avoid unauthorised use.

## **❖ AIR QUALITY**

The council continues to invest significant time and money, relative to other district authorities, in addressing its responsibilities.

Three Air Quality Management Areas remain - in central Lancaster, in Carnforth and in Galgate. The AQMAs were declared because the city council expected levels of the traffic exhaust pollutant nitrogen dioxide to exceed one of the government's mandatory air quality objectives. Ongoing monitoring in these three areas continues to indicate exceedance.

In 2013 Lancaster adopted an Air Quality Strategy which sets out the current position and a process to support the production of an effective Air Quality Action Plan. The city council has continued to pursue the strategy including collaboration with the county council's public health function, the pursuit of grant monies to promote the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, the development of national, local and regional planning policy and guidance, work to assess the impact of taxis and buses in Lancaster centre and



setting up a model to enable predictive assessment of emissions- reducing options.

Of major importance to the planned delivery of the Air Quality Strategy is the delivery of an effective transport master plan for Lancaster. A plan has been put forward by the county council and consultation is currently ongoing regarding the content of the plan.

The delivery of the Heysham/M6 link road is seen as a key action to provide relief to the three AQMAs. There is a conditional requirement as part of the permission that requires beneficial measures to be implemented.

More detailed information on these and other actions is contained in the 2014 Local Air Quality Management Progress Report available at:

<https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/airquality-downloads-links/>

The role of Local Air Quality Management has continued to be under review nationally by Defra in 2014/15 and a consultation was undertaken in January 2015. The outcome is that local authorities continue to have a key role in delivering local action. The commencement of EU infraction proceedings against the UK for breach of nitrogen dioxide Limit Values is nationally providing an impetus for action. Lancaster has submitted a list of completed, ongoing and proposed actions to Defra as part of planned submission to the EU. The health impact of poor air quality is the main reason for action in Lancaster, however the notice of legal action reinforces this continued need. The European Commission has stated that it would like 'to achieve full compliance with existing air quality standards by 2020 at the latest'.