



## Leader's Report

16 December 2015

### Report of the Leader of the Council

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Leader's report to Council.

This report is public.

#### RECOMMENDATION

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 meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015, later in this agenda.

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

As required by Access to Information Procedure Rule 17 and Part 1 Section 7 (5.1) of the Constitution, set out below are details of a decision taken under the Urgent Business Procedure.

The Chief Executive consulted with the Leader and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Regeneration & Planning to take an Urgent Business Decision set out below. The reason for the urgency was that a decision was required by the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015 in order for the application to be submitted to the DCLG and therefore needed to be taken prior to the Cabinet meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was consulted and agreed to waive the five day call-in period in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17(a).

### **3.0 Decision Details**

The decision is set out below:-

- (1) *That the City Council agrees to act as the Accountable Body for the Venus and Cupid Arts Trust Coastal Revival Fund application.*
- (2) *That a letter from the Chief Executive agreeing to act as the accountable body for the funding is written and sent to the Venus and Cupid Arts Trust at the earliest opportunity.*
- (3) *That consultation is undertaken with a view to waiving call-in, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny procedure rule 17, to enable the decision to be implemented immediately.*

Approval was given to the above action, which is reported to this meeting in accordance with the City Council's Constitution, Part 4, Section 4, Cabinet Procedure Rule 1.10(b).

### **4.0 Leader's Comments**

Lancashire Leaders' met on 2 November to discuss the proposals for a Combined Authority. Among other items, the importance of ensuring that the Combined Authority is fair, open and accountable which was agreed at the previous meeting, proposed additional safeguards were added. It was agreed that whilst there was currently no appetite for an elected mayor for Lancashire, guidance from the Government was inconsistent. The group could see no benefits, but may review the position in the future. The Working Group confirmed that their report was about the formation of a Combined Authority and that Devolution would be developed subsequently. It was felt to be important that authorities across Lancashire could work successfully together and it was accepted that any Council could choose not to agree or defer a decision, but that the door should be left open for them. An addendum on a code of Conduct and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules was also on the agenda.

This will be a two-stage process. (1) to approve in principle; (2) to consult the public and stakeholders such as the Business Community (who are said to be very enthusiastic) and the NHS. The consultation process is what the Secretary of State will rely on along with the Governance Review. It was stressed that we were asking for Lancashire solutions to Lancashire problems and that if the benefits aren't there it won't go ahead.

On 6 November Lancaster was lit up again and it was an excellent weekend, even though the weather was mixed. Amazing light projects, music and dance performances and installations were on our historic buildings and in our squares. More arts organisations than ever took part and more venues were used, including the Library and the Priory. Fiery animations and Gamelan music at the Castle and my particular favourite was The Judges' Lodgings projections and story. The

fireworks, as always, were a stunning and colourful display. There were daytime events and activities for families. Thanks to all who took part and to our partners.

It is hard to read the reports that County can no longer continue to fully fund Lancaster's arts organisations. They are forced to drastically cut funding for 2016 and even further for 2017. After that there will be no funding. Our district relies on the arts to bring tourists to the area, to support jobs and our economy making Lancaster an interesting cultural centre to live and work in and to attract people to come to work in the NHS and our Universities. A small group met with the portfolio holder for finance from County on the 11 November to ask that the small amount of funding be shared where there are already arts organisations. Spreading it too thinly throughout Lancashire could undermine the areas that have established arts provision. We recognise the incredible difficulties that the County have, as have all local authorities, and we are truly concerned about the future.

On 12 November a meeting with officers and the Conservative Leader took place. This was a productive meeting about housing numbers and the allocation of sites. I had already spoken to the Green Leader on this subject. We are all concerned about the amount of land needed, even though we recognise the need for more housing. This should not become a political issue and I sincerely hope that we can avoid that.

Lancaster University's Vice Chancellor met myself and the Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning) on the 18 November. This is a regular meeting. The land for the Innovation Park has now been signed over to the University and we were told that the finance is coming together for it. We raised the request from our Swedish Twin Town, Växjö, that there is greater co-operation and some education and business interest between us. The Vice Chancellor took the invitation and offered to contact them. We asked about voter registration on campus and were told that the University are willing to consider following the Sheffield model of student registration if this can be developed in partnership with the council. Combined Authorities and an analysis of the region concerning science innovation were discussed and the coming Green Paper on changes to Higher Education and possible private providers.

On 19 November Sir Steve Houghton from the LGA came to give us his experience of setting up a Combined Authority, and of Devolution. Thank you to all parties who came along.

Whilst there was relief that the cuts to Working Tax Credits and Police funding were not to take place, the Spending Review headlines indicate that Local Government is to take a further 24% cut in funding over the next few years, on top of the cuts of 40% or so that we are already managing. We now await the Settlement sometime in December.

In spite of this, as this is the last report before Christmas, I wish you all a happy Christmas and New Year.

## **5.0 Other Matters**

Cabinet minutes are attached at the end of this agenda

## **6.0 Key Decisions**

The following Key Decision was taken by Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015:

- (1) Management of Arts Investments

The following Key Decision was taken by Cabinet on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015:

- (1) Ryelands Park /Greaves Park Masterplans 2015-2025

The following Officer Delegated (Key) Decisions were taken during this period:

- (1) Financial Support to Deliver the Empty Homes Strategy
- (2) Morecambe Area Action Plan – Connecting Victoria Street
- (3) Recruitment Clerk of Works – Wave Reflection Wall

## **Background Papers**

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015.