



Leader's Report

16 May 2016

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

Information on Cabinet matters is provided in the minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 26 April 2016, later in this agenda.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

There are no decisions to report since the last Leader's Report on 13 April 2016.

3.0 Leader's Comments

On the 25 March, the Chief Executive and I visited Kendal to meet with South Lakeland District Council's Leader and Chief Executive. Their main concern was the Housing Bill going through Parliament. This Bill is giving many councils concern, particularly about the emphasis on Starter Homes rather than Affordable Housing. It is currently being amended by the Lords.

Most parties were represented at the training on Retailing and Town Centres Policies and Projects updates. This showed the trends in Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth. The Local Plan must address these trends in order to ensure that our town centres continue to increase trade. There are so many empty shops in Lancaster and Morecambe and the White Young Green report shows a downward

trend. They emphasise that we need change and development, particularly as the Internet has changed retail demand.

The Lancashire Leaders' meeting on the 05 April was mainly concerned with progress on the Combined Authority. After 05 May a Shadow Authority will be set up. A presentation on Transport was given. This identifies Transport for Lancashire's long term, major scheme strategic transport requirements over the next twenty years. Other transport agencies, such as Highways England and Network Rail, will be heavily involved in the discussions. These would unlock regeneration and allow changes to be made more quickly. Lancaster South Supporting Infrastructure and Lancaster to Morecambe Rail Electrification are in the list of strategic priorities before 2024. Edwin Booth was present and was answering questions.

Another Canal Corridor meeting took place on the 07 April. British Land architect showed the new proposals for the site which include the Grand Theatre's and Musician's Coop plans. These are in draft form as all parties have yet to see and agree them. There are many changes and I am pleased to say that we have agreed to present the plans to all political parties in the near future. I am also pleased that all elected members are to receive regular updates on progress at Salt Ayre. Building works will begin from Monday 09 May 2016 and the briefing explains the phases and the plans are coming in on time and on budget.

On the 13 April, Susan Parsonage, came to spend the day with our officers and myself. This was a most useful exchange of ideas and a familiarisation opportunity for her. She will be coming to Lancaster to start work in July.

The Cabinet Members met the Lancaster Chamber Acting Chief Executive, John O'Neill and the new BID Manager, Rachel Wilkinson, on the 19 April. They updated us on their view on the flooding and asked for our progress. The Cable Street unit is helping people to apply for Resilience Grants for the future. We are reporting weekly to government on our progress. They asked about a joint marketing strategy for the opening of the Link Road and it was pointed out that it was a County project. Some suggestions for our website were made. We are working with the University on an App. The Council answered questions on Student Housing, Canal Corridor, the Local Plan, the Corporate Plan and the National Grid.

I attended the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on flooding on the 20 April. This was most informative. All the services presented their contributions so that there was a sharing of information and it was a learning experience for all concerned. The Environment Agency plans for the future are vital and Electricity North West gave a carefully considered report that showed how incredibly fast the river was flowing and how high it reached. The main finding seemed to be that resilience is vital for the future, but that all the services worked together incredibly well.

On the Queen's 90th Birthday I attended a Beacon Lighting at the Castle along with Councillor Hanson, the Mayor, Susan Parsonage, and officers. It was a beautiful evening. Two beacons were lit and we were given a preview of the new Prison Life Exhibition. This was very well done and well worth the visit.

Perhaps one of the most important meetings of the month was with the Chairman of the Arts Council England, Darren Henley, and Alison Clark, who is the North West equivalent. They came to speak to arts organisations in Lancaster District, but particularly they aim to increase funding outside London if there are worthwhile projects. They want to see Culture and the Arts as vital to economic development and they are delighted that the arts organisations are working in partnership. The criticism in the past has been that each organisation has applied and worked separately. They visited The Dukes and particularly commented on the “First Friday’s” Events. The next funding round is in July, but it will probably be next year before the theatre is ready to apply.

4.0 Key Decisions

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 26 April 2016:

- (1) St Leonard’s House (reconsideration following call-in)

The following Officer Delegated Key Decision was taken during this period:

- (1) Award of Contract for Electrical Matters for Kitchens and Bathrooms at Westgate
- (2) Award of Contract for Installation of New Kitchen and Bathroom Flooring at Westgate
- (3) Award of Contract for Supply of Kitchen Units and Work Tops at Westgate
- (4) Award of Contract for Supply of Plumbing Materials for Replacement Kitchens at Westgate
- (5) Corporate Non-Housing Delivery Plan – Williamson Park (Palm House) Butterfly House Phase 2 Works

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2016.