

COUNCIL

Leader's Report

27 September 2017

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 8 August and 5 September 2017 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 19 July 2017.

3.0 Leader's Comments

It's been some time since the last Council meeting so there have been many meetings about the Canal Corridor proposal both with the Cabinet and with members. Our advisors, GVA and Pinsent are testing the commercial and legal case for the Council. Members have had the opportunity to question them. The University representative also attended. The first development deal has been viewed as unacceptable due to the additional revenue pressures and risks. The September meeting enabled members to look at other financing plans and options in regards to the development. A further cross party meeting in October is planned.

A trip to Hereford by three Councillors and three Officers on 09 August helped to clarify a lot of issues. Their new development opened in 2014 and involved the demolition of a former cattle market and the construction of around 300,000 square feet of retail and leisure uses. British Land now manage the centre. It is smaller than ours will be, but it is

across a dual carriageway from their town centre so that is comparable to ours in our concern about the effects of the new build. Their road is a significant physical barrier. They estimate around 1,500 jobs have been created following the £90m investment in the scheme. Since its opening, dwell time and frequency of visits have increased year on year. Current annual footfall is now 6.5m, well above original forecasts of 4-4.5m. Leisure uses are increasing in importance and value and now account for 24% of visitor spending.

Footfall is monitored by cameras and data shows visitors increasingly use both the new and old shopping centres. They can now measure the overall impact. The new development is considered to have been beneficial to the existing centre. A number of retailers are unable to get a space in the new build so have a shop in the old town as business has been enhanced.

The scheme has been so successful that British Land are considering developing Phase 2 on some of the surface car parks, comprising nine retail units, plus commercial leisure. There has been a claimed tenfold increase in business rates generated by the site.

British Land have invested in independent businesses and are working with local communities and arts providers and are involved in wider strategies and projects. The two centres are now seen as “one centre” with common design features and complementary material (e.g. shared surface) and signage as key elements.

There was strong opposition to the scheme which they addressed in different ways. Quality was a key consideration and critical to the success of key elements of the scheme such as car parking, building design and the public realm. The Council are delighted with the scheme and say that even the strongest opposition now accepts that it has benefited the city.

The Odeon Cinema has been very successful in attracting people from a wide area and boosts the evening economy. The scheme must be considered in the context of a long term vision and strategy for future development of the city and the wider district. Many of the scheme’s opponents (most notably the Civic Society) now admit that they were wrong to oppose the development and can now see its merits.

On the 26 June I was present at the interviews for a new Chief Officer. The Committee was unanimous in appointing Estelle Culligan with responsibility for Legal and Governance.

On the 10 July, Councillor Hanson and I paid a visit to the Storey Garden. We met David Redmore and the Chair of the Friends. We were most impressed by the improvements in the garden and in the work of the Friends. We discussed the efforts to raise money for restoration of the art work. We hope that this will be successful as it will certainly enhance the garden and The Storey itself. For those who have not seen the new planting in front of the Castle, do go to see the amazing change. We hope this new planting will enhance other parts of the area.

On the 17 July it was a pleasure to attend the Freedom of the City March of the Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment. It was nice to see Councillors and Aldermen attending alongside the Mayor.

Lancaster University Graduation Dinner is always a real event and an opportunity to see a wide range of people from the area and from the past. This was on the 20 July. Charles Wilson was present, one of our past Directors.

On the 26 July, Councillor Hanson and I met Marc Levy, the North West Regional Manager of the Jewish Leadership Council. He spoke about the rise in hate crime and he was delighted that the whole Council supported the National Definition and our positive attitude to dealing with any reports of anti-Semitism and hate in general.

On the 27 July, the Chief Executive and I met Richard Wise, British Land representative to talk about the Council's latest thoughts on the Canal Corridor. British Land believe that Lancaster has the potential to play a far more important role in the region and he was pleased to hear that we would be visiting Hereford. He said that British Land are in it for the long term and wanted a quality scheme that would enhance the area.

I have been to see the new paving and signs in Central Morecambe with Councillor Hanson and I am most impressed.

Other Matters

Cabinet minutes for 8 August and 5 September 2017 are attached at the end of this agenda.

4.0 Key Decisions

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 8 August:

- (1) Consultation on the Introduction of Selective Licensing in the Private Rented Sector
- (2) Community Housing Fund
- (3) Chatsworth Gardens Housing Regeneration Project – Consideration of Phase 2 Proposals
- (4) Heysham Gateway

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 5 September:

- (1) Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Update – Revaluation Support

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

- (1) Installation of Smoke Alarms at The Greaves and Ridge Estates, Lancaster
- (2) Fire Precaution Works and Communal Area Upgrades Glebe Court Sheltered Scheme
- (3) External Door Replacement Contract 2017/18
- (4) Firewall Equipment for a Link Between The Old Fire Station and Salt Ayre Leisure Centre
- (5) Fire Precaution Works and Communal Area Upgrades Mainway
- (6) Economic Reserve Growth Allocations

- (7) Purchase of Two Refuse Collection Vehicles
- (8) Re-Roofing Ridge Estate Lancaster Phase 1 2017/18
- (9) Marsh Estate and Carnforth Flat Roofing Renewal
- (10) Bailrigg Garden Village – Capacity Funding (call-in period waived)

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meetings held on 8 August and 5 September 2017.