



## **Leader's Report**

**25 September 2019**

### **Report of the Leader of the Council**

<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT</b>
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 meetings held on 6 August 2019 and 3 September 2019 later in this agenda. It should be noted that, whilst the call-in period has expired, the minutes of 3 September 2019 have not yet been ratified by Cabinet.

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

There are no decisions to report since the last Leader's Report on 17 July 2019.

##### **3.0 Leader's Comments**

###### **Priorities**

Thank you to everyone who has already commented on the draft priorities document. With many of your responses being more editorial than content focused I'm hoping this means that the document circulated broadly articulates a share set of priorities. Cabinet members will continue to develop this document with the view to it contributing to the budget process. If you haven't yet provided comments, but have them, please send them to me as soon as possible.

## **Eden**

Work continues on laying the foundations for the Eden North project. The council continues to work closely with Eden to progress both the development of plans, and funding requests. On the topic of funds we continue to have discussions with government agencies and across parties to try and secure the funding needed for the capital build.

## **Flooding**

A number of residents, small businesses and Lancaster Town Hall experienced flooding through the August storms. Most, although not all associated with the heavy rainfall on the afternoon of Friday 9th August. Some of the businesses that flooded are those that regularly flood in heavy rain, and yet because the rainfall exceeds the required tolerances of the drainage infrastructure, no agency is responsible for assisting these businesses.

The residents of Galgate and South Lancaster have been advised by the Environment Agency that the flood risk mitigation schemes identified as needed to reduce flood risk are too expensive and thus will not go ahead. These decisions highlights significant flaws in the policy surrounding the infrastructure investment needed for climate adaptation which penalise residents who have complicated causes of flooding and/or do not live in areas where large numbers of residents live.

## **Local government finance settlement**

While there was a lot of noise about additional funding for local government in the Autumn statement, much of this money isn't coming to district councils, and much of what was announced as government spend, is actually predicated on councils raising council tax. The reality for Lancaster City Council is that in real terms our government funding will continue to fall, and our reliance on broken revenue streams such as business rates will continue.

## **Convention of the North and Devolution**

Like many other council leaders, I travelled to Rotherham on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September for the Convention of the North. Setting aside the media reporting of the speech, I'd recommend the text to you (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-convention-of-the-north-in-rotherham>). The PM made important announcements about future plans for devolution and what is clear is that the government continues to be willing to devolve powers to elected Mayors, but doesn't really have a plan for the 50% of the residents of the North who don't have an elected Mayor.

We continue to expect councils in the east of Lancashire to approach the Minister about the establishment of a Pennine unitary council any day, and there are questions about whether that move will precipitate further local government restructuring across Lancashire. Lancashire has for a number of years wrestled with the question of local government reorganisation. Plans for a combined authority have stalled, and there is no emerging consensus. If this is a topic that you've pondered I'd welcome your thoughts, as discussions will no doubt continue at the Lancashire District Leaders and Lancashire Leaders meetings.

#### **4.0 Key Decisions**

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 6 August 2019:

- (1) Proposed Property Investment Decisions
- (2) Eden Project North

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 3 September 2019:

- (1) Lancaster Caton Road (Phase 3) Flood Risk Management Scheme
- (2) Applications for Grant Funding from Lune Valley Community Land Trust and Halton Senior Co-Housing Group Ltd

#### **Background Papers**

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meetings held on 6 August and 3 September 2019.