



Leader's Report 26 February 2020

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 meeting held on 14 January 2020. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 February 2020 (scheduled to reconvene on 18 February 2020) were not available at the time of publication of the agenda and will be tabled at the March Council meeting.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

There are no decisions to report since the last Leader's Report on 29 January 2020.

3.0 Leader's Comments

Storms Ciara, Dennis & "un-named" weather front

Thanks to all the officers whose work helps keep us safe and dry all year round, and in particular for the work that has been done through Storms Ciara, Dennis and the as yet "un-named" weather front. Our community and communities across the country are increasingly frustrated that response times to flood events are so long. As the City Council we aren't the lead local flood authority, but we are the planning authority, we have civil contingency responsibilities, and our residents expect us to not meet our statutory responsibilities but to advocate for systems that properly reduce flood risk and build resilience.

Future of local government

The discussion about the future of local government continues. Officers from the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government (MCHLG) came to brief the Lancashire Leaders on the view of government. In summary, the message was that there would be no significant devolution deal without a mayoral combined authority (CA), and that in proposing a CA we would need to review the underpinning governance ie the district councils. The strong message was that 15 members (the current number of district councils plus county, Blackburn & Blackpool) was probably too big. Our discussions also continue with South Lakeland and Barrow, and the one position I am firmly taking is that Lancaster, South Lakeland and Barrow are a function economic area and we want a solution that supports our ongoing collaboration rather than making it harder for us to work together. I have asked officers to organise a briefing for all councillors and we will look to formally adopt a position as a council.

Budget

As the first budget of a new administration putting the budget together has been a big job. I want to thank Cllr Anne Whitehead, Dan Bates, Paul Thompson, the finance teams and every officer across the directorates who have worked to bring forward budget bids. We've learnt a lot about the budget process through putting this year's together, and we already know we'll do some things different next year. One of those will be a more detailed examination of what is called the 'base budget', this is an issue noted by both cabinet members and budget and performance committee members. We look forward to that process starting in March through the Finance Resilience Group.

4.0 Key Decisions

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 11 February 2020:

- (1) Corporate Fees and Charges Review Policy 2020/21
- (2) Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme
- (3) Future High Streets

The following Key Decisions are scheduled to be taken when that meeting reconvenes on 18 February 2020:

- (4) Budget & Policy Framework Update 2020/21
- (5) Eden Project North
- (6) Job Evaluation Project

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020.