



## Leader's Report

24 June 2020

### 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 30 April 2020. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 June 2020 were not available at the time of publication of the agenda/are still subject to call-in and will be tabled at the July Council meeting.

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

As required by the Access to Information Procedure Rule 14, General Exception – Urgent Business an Individual Cabinet Member Key Decision was taken by the Leader on 5 June 2020 and the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to waive call-in. Further information is provided in 4.0.

##### 3.0 Leader's Comments

Like many, it feels like the council and local government more broadly has been itching to get out of lock-down. Since the April council, and particularly since annual council there has been an increasing pace of activity that isn't solely focused on the pandemic response, although work focused on the pandemic response continues and grows.

## **COVID Response, Reopening & Reset**

As we transition from phase 1 of the pandemic 'lock-down' to phase 2 'reopening' it is important to note that unlike many emergencies that the council responds to much of the work of phase 1, will continue into phase 2. In addition to the work driven by the pandemic response, there are now attempts by both councillors & officers to return to some of the work & projects put aside to make capacity for the emergency response. I'd ask councillors to be mindful that routine work is still impacted by the COVID response.

Careful management of the reopening phase of the pandemic is vital. There will be Lancashire-wide public health messages underlining the importance of everyone playing their part in trying to minimise the risk of a second wave and I would ask all councillors to share those messages. Test and trace is still very much in development, so the best tools we have for controlling the pandemic remain physically distancing and handwashing.

Officers & cabinet members have been working closely with businesses and business organisations across the district to support reopening. We also continue to develop shared thinking about how best to support economic recovery in the district.

Through the pandemic response the city council has built new partnerships and networks and they will be crucial to how we understand what it means to build back better across the district. Councillors are central to this work. You are our key informants as to the priorities of the communities and neighbourhoods you represent. You each bring a unique lived experience and your own expertise to our policy and strategy discussions and I would encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities that there are across the council to have your say and represent your residents and organisations.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the financial outlook of the council. As foreshadowed at the last council meeting, I have amended my financial delegations to ensure that all work interrupted by the pandemic response, or work previously approved but not yet begun, will be carefully considered by officers and portfolio holders before progressing. The new delegation is included in the papers.

## **Black Lives Matter**

Like many cities across the world, Lancaster has had an outpouring of anti-racist campaigning, and a growing conversation about how the legacy of slavery is seen and named across our city. Tonight's council has been addressed by resident Geraldine Onek, and her questions must be heard and sincerely answered. The actions we take must not just be a fleeting response to the latest horrific incident of racism but a long-term commitment to doing the work to bring about change in ourselves, in our council, and in our district.

## **Pride**

June is world Pride month and would normally have seen Lancaster Pride celebrated in our streets and Morecambe's second Pride celebrated in July. Unfortunately this year, neither will be able to go ahead. I was pleased to be asked to be part of BBC Radio Lancashire's Virtual Pride celebrations at the beginning of June. Speaking at the same time as Lancaster was protesting, the intersection of Pride and the Black Lives Matter campaign was at the forefront of my thinking. Remember, Pride's origins lie in police harassment of the LGBTQ+ community, and the folk at the centre of the riot ensued were black trans women like Marsha P Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. I also noted, how our district's response to the pandemic had been rooted in caring for and supporting our neighbours, and that care and solidarity are also at the root of both Pride and Black Lives Matter.

## **Local government structures**

June has seen two key developments in how we, as a council, work with the councils around us. First, cabinet agreed to the formation of a joint committee with South Lakeland District Council and Barrow Borough Council to formalise some of our shared work and to bring greater transparency to that work. Second, the leaders of Lancashire's district councils, combined authorities and county council agreed to go forward in developing a model for a combined authority with a mayor. Neither piece of work precludes the other, and as a council we continue to pursue both in the hope of securing the best possible arrangements for our residents and our region.

## **Cabinet reshuffle**

As you are aware Cllr Whitehead stood down as the Cabinet Member for Finance after five years of service. It is in no small part due to her hard work and diligence, alongside that of the finance team, that as a council we can draw on our reserves to make some of our own decisions on how best to support vulnerable people and local businesses at this difficult time. I'm sure that all councillors will join me in thanking Cllr Whitehead for her service.

A detailed list of portfolio changes has been circulated to all councillors, but the headline changes are that we welcome Cllr John Reynolds to his first council meeting at the finance cabinet member, and welcome back Cllr Janice Hanson to the planning portfolio.

## **3.0 Key Decisions**

The following Key Decision was taken by Cabinet on 30 April 2020:

### **(1) Morecambe Future Hugh Streets**

The following Key Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 9 June 2020.

### **(1) Covid-19 Financial Impact**

### **(2) Lancaster District Plan 2030 – Beyond the Crisis**

- (3) Lancaster Canal Quarter: Strategic Regeneration Framework and Delivery Strategy**
- (4) Lancaster and South Cumbria Joint Committee**
- (5) Launch of a Rail Strategy for Lancaster District**
- (6) Procurement of a replacement Customer Relationship Management System**

The following Individual Cabinet Member (Key) Decision was taken on 5 June 2020.

**Covid 19 – Council Tax Hardship Fund 2020-21.**

- (1) That the Leader determined a spending plan in line with Option 2 and approves Option 3, for the residual balance to be placed in a reserve for future consideration by Cabinet.*

The decision enables the Council to provide financial assistance in excess of Government expectations in helping those most in need with their council tax liability for 2020-21. It also allows Cabinet to further assess the economic impact of Covid-19 in coming months and develop the next phase of funding in consultation with partner organisations. The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny agreed to waive the call-in period to reduce any delay in the Council being able to provide financial support to vulnerable households.

**Background Papers**

Cabinet agendas 30 April & 9 June 2020