



Leader's Report

27 January 2021

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 December 2020. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 January 2021 were not available at the time of publication of the agenda and will be tabled at the Council meeting on 24 February 2021.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken in this period.

3.0 Leader's Comments

COVID remains the central focus of the city council's work including public protection, resident support, business support and partnership working with the NHS and county to support public health. I remain deeply grateful for the vast commitment of officers and partners to meeting this challenge and for the kindness they bring to their work.

The vaccine roll out is happening at pace across the region, we are still waiting for the government to provide district level data, but we are told it will come, and when

it does, we will work closely with county and the NHS to ensure our residents have a good take up of the vaccine. On last report more than 95% of residents being invited to have a vaccination at the Health Innovation Campus were doing so.

We continue to work with a strong network of partner organisations to understand the needs of our residents and to support them. Since council last met there have been four community briefing calls. There is close co-operation between the Morecambe Foodbank, Eggcup, other food groups and the council as we all work to ensure no one goes hungry, including through the school holidays. We have worked with primary schools and county to provide tech for families struggling with home schooling through the Emergency Assistance Grant. The community hub and volunteer line continue, as they have done since the beginning of the pandemic, to be a central point for residents needing help and those with help to give to be connected. During lockdown we have been calling those newly added to the clinically extremely vulnerable list and those who through previous lockdowns have needed extra support. Our housing teams and partners continue to work to ensure that everyone in the district has a roof over their head. The public realm team and many friends' groups continue to make our green spaces welcoming and deal with the enormous amounts of rubbish being generated.

Work also continues to support local businesses and we have continued to hold well attended briefing calls. The business grants process is increasingly complex as the schemes differ depending on tier or lockdown and apply to different time periods. As the pandemic drags on, we are also dealing with businesses and business owners who are increasingly distraught, the level of support being offered by the government is less at this point in the pandemic than it was at the beginning, but local businesses have already used their reserves.

A particular challenge of the business support grants is the Additional Restrictions Grant. This is the one scheme that allows significant design by local councils. In the Lancaster district, we have chosen to focus on those businesses and business owners who have been excluded from other support. In doing this design work we have worked with local business umbrella groups including the Chamber, the Business Improvement Districts, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Ethical Small Traders Association.

Although the vaccine is rolling out at pace, there are months of this pandemic still to endure. The old messages of: stay at home – protect the NHS – save lives; and hands – face – space if you have to go out, apply. Although the vaccine significantly reduces the risk of you getting seriously ill, no vaccine is 100% effective and data is still being assessed on whether you can still transmit the virus after being vaccinated. So, once you've had the vaccine all the current rules and restrictions continue to apply to you.

We also need to remain aware that the pandemic has been devastating for many. People have lost loved ones, had COVID, have long-COVID, seen their physical and mental health challenged, lost jobs, businesses and homes, been worked to the point of exhaustion and some beyond. There are also the changes we will want to keep, there are new friendships, support networks, community organisations and businesses, and a renewed recognition of the beauty of our district.

The path our council agreed just on twelve months ago, has served us well through the pandemic and will continue to do that as our thoughts keep stretching out to recovery.

We still have the climate emergency to address – as I write this report, flood alerts have once again been issued for the district. We need to work through the recommendations of the people's jury and that work has begun. The climate emergency and environment advisory group will have its next meeting in early February and details will be circulated to all councillors. Work continues on the climate emergency review of the local plan and all the measures identified to ensure that we, as a council, reach net carbon zero by 2030.

Community wealth-building offers us a methodology for economic development that increasingly puts power in the hands of local people and businesses and recognises the importance of social and environmental justice within the economy. Work continues both to strengthen the council's own approach to community wealth-building and to build and support a network of organisations across the district who share this approach.

Our residents, local organisations, businesses and institutions have just been amazing throughout the pandemic. Early in the pandemic we knew we couldn't provide the care and support we wanted to deliver by ourselves. We recognised that working in partnership and drawing on the skills and knowledge of the district would be the only way to do this, and our district has been rewarded for that approach. It is important that we hang onto these new ways of working and we will do.

As we move into 2021, we will return to some of the plans that were disrupted from 2020. One of those is the development of a district wide plan for 2030. This idea started from our carbon target and the recognition that the council meeting our target is not enough. We need all sorts of organisations to meet that target and that there is value in sharing that work. However, while meeting the carbon target is vital to avoiding the climate catastrophe, there remains long and deep social and economic injustices that also need to be addressed. Otherwise, the climate emergency is just the last in the long-line of emergencies that some get to buy their way out of, while others are left to carry the burden. The global plan to meet this challenge is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are 17 targets agreed by nations, organisations and institutions across the world to transform our world. Although slowed by COVID, the council has been working to develop organisational outcomes measures based on the SDGs and building on the priorities agreed by full council last year. Still a work in progress, you should start to see these measures appearing as reference points in monitoring and reporting as the year goes forward. We will also work with residents, local organisations, businesses and institutions to identify where work to achieve the SDGs can be a shared project.

Our three themes of addressing the climate emergency, building community wealth and community engagement are also the central work of the joint committee we share with South Lakeland District and Barrow Borough Councils. We will continue to build a regional approach, as well as a district approach on this

important work, as we continue discussions with key organisations about the possible formation of a Bay unitary authority and await the government's decision as to which proposals will go forward for consultation.

4.0 Decisions

The following Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 19 January 2021:

1. Viability Protocol Supplementary Planning Document
2. Meeting Housing Need Supplementary Planning Document
3. Canal Quarter – Use of Reserves
4. Corporate Fees and Charges Policy Review
5. Budget and Policy Framework Update
6. Appointment to Outside Bodies
7. Disposal of South Lodge

There were no Officer Delegated Key Decisions taken since the last Leader's report.

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda 19 January 2021