



## **Leader's Report**

**24 February 2021**

### **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 meeting held on 19 January. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 February 2021 were not available at the time of publication of the agenda and will be tabled at the Council meeting on 16 March 2021.

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

No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken in this period.

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

###### **Cabinet Update**

As previously advised, it is with regret that I convey Cllr Jean Parr's resignation from cabinet.

I am grateful to Jean for her service and would have wished it to continue. Jean brought passion and commitment to both her original role as Arts, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, and her more recently expanded role including well-being, social justice

& equalities and community safety. I look forward to continuing to work with Jean for the good of the district.

I am delighted to announce that Cllr Colin Hartley has accepted my invitation to join cabinet and has already begun his duties as the cabinet member for the Arts, Culture, Leisure & Well-being portfolio.

## **COVID**

We meet in the week the Government is due to release its roadmap out of lockdown. So far, there has been no indication that the government will consult with local leaders in the development of this strategy.

Although I do not know what the Government will set out, what I do know is that just lifting lockdown is not enough.

Many residents and local businesses will continue to need help. As we have shown, time and time again throughout this pandemic, local government is uniquely placed to deliver this support. However, this must be in the form of multi-year funding to allow plans for building back greener and fairer to be developed and implemented. It should not be the piecemeal plethora of small funding pots, with burdensome administration that leave some to fall through the cracks.

As always, I continue to thank our officers for their outstanding work.

## **Finance & Governance**

Although I will leave substantive comment on the budget to Cllr Whitehead, as the cabinet member responsible, I would like to put on record my thanks to the finance team for the work they have put into preparing this year's budget papers. The finance team has been an integral part of the council's COVID response work and so they have been extraordinarily busy through this period.

This would also be the appropriate moment to reiterate the request that councillor's queries and requests to officers, should be sent through directors. As I have previously explained this allows directors to manage workload and to have sight of the concerns of councillors. Not following this request can disrupt workflows and put unnecessary stress on more officers. Please, send queries and requests through directors.

## *The Bay*

Rumour has it that by the time I deliver this report we may have heard which options for local government reorganisation the government has decided to consult on for Cumbria & Lancaster. In preparation for that announcement, we have continued to work with stakeholders to build our understanding of what they hope for from a Bay unitary authority.

## **Climate Emergency**

A very successful public meeting was held on Monday 8th February bringing together members of the People's Jury with members of the Cabinet Advisory Group on Climate Emergency and the Environment. It is great to see connections building across the district on shared work to meet the climate emergency.

We have often said that we are confident that the city council will meet its target to be net carbon zero by 2030. But that in order to meet the climate emergency it is important we take as many people and organisations with us as possible. As well as learning from those further advanced in this work than we are.

## ***Grassland Management Strategy***

As councillors will have been previously briefed, the council is adopting a new grasslands management strategy. Residents feel passionately about how local green space is managed, and managing our green spaces well is vital to maintaining and increasing biodiversity.

Working with experts including the Natural England, Butterfly Conservation, the Lune Valley Pollinators and environmental consultants, the city council has established nine cutting palettes: public open space, managed long meadow, desirelines, meadow edges, verges, amenity prestige, informal sports, and two types of wildflower meadows (introductory mix and perennial mix). We are currently consulting with residents as to how areas of grassland near their homes should be managed.

## **Community**

Like many communities, we gathered to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. Often this event takes place in and around the Lancaster Town Hall, however, this year the event was virtual. Hosted by MoreMusic the event brought together speakers, music and prayer to consider the theme 'be a light in the dark' and to ask us how we can challenge identity-based persecution.

Our regular programme of community engagements and conversations continues. Food was a big part of the meeting on February 8<sup>th</sup> and it was both inspiring to learn more about the work of Food Futures and gratifying to hear how supported they had felt by the council in their work. This overview of the work of Food Futures will be followed up by a dedicated community conversation on 'supporting action on food insecurity' on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February. Although food is not a statutory responsibility of a district council, it is one that the previous Labour administration invested in through the creation of a public health officer focused on food security work, and one that has been increasingly important through COVID.

A couple of weeks prior, we partnered with Lancaster Vision to hold a conference on our Housing Strategy. The event, attended by nearly 100 people, was a mix of presentations, breakout and feedback sessions, covering topics such as increasing the supply of social housing, the role of community led housing, housing poverty and housing & the climate emergency.

We also continue our regular series of community calls bringing together town and parish councils as well as the community, voluntary and faith sector to share information and build connections. As well as the many briefings and consultations that are currently taking place related to Bailrigg Garden Village, the Canal Quarter, and the grassland management strategy.

## **Economy**

As our local NHS continues to do an amazing job in rolling out the vaccine, we increasingly hope that as it becomes safe to do so we will be allowed out and businesses will be allowed to reopen.

For many people, organisations and businesses across our district, summer means festivals and events, and so we have begun meeting with events organisers, as well as the police, to begin conversations about face-to-face events returning to the district. We do, of course, await government announcements, but as and when it is safe, I'm sure we will all look forward to supporting our local tourism and events businesses.

After many, many years, we are in the final stages of consultation on the Canal Quarter Strategic Regeneration Framework. This last stage of consultation follows a series of engagement events that were held prior to lockdown, after which a draft framework was published. Written comments were then invited and nearly 100 responses were received from residents, stakeholders, community groups and statutory bodies, after which some further changes were made. This is the final opportunity for comments before incorporation into the Local Plan, as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Throughout the pandemic the City Council has worked hard to support local businesses. We will need to continue to focus on this work even as the pandemic eases. As we do that work, we will need to not only be focused on rebuilding economic prosperity but ensuring that work helps to meet the climate emergency and to increase wellbeing and reduce inequality.

## **4.0 Decisions**

The following Decisions were taken by Cabinet on 9 February 2021:

1. Raising Standards in the Private Rented Sector
2. Budget & Policy Framework Update 2021/22 – 2024/25 including Capital Strategy & Treasury Management
3. Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme
4. Acceptance of Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding
5. Revised Economic Regeneration Investment Proposal

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

## **Background Papers**

Cabinet agenda 9 February 2021