

SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS PORTFOLIO

The Cabinet Member portfolio for Sustainable Neighbourhoods was created in January 2020 and covered work in Environmental Health, Sustainable Food, Active Travel and Community Buildings.

The **Public Protection team** continued through lockdown with far more business than usual. As an indication of the increased demand on services, with people confined to their homes and usual services suspended, complaints increased by over 200% on previous years and sadly the number of public funerals dealt with increased by around 70% (from 26 to 48). Specific service highlights include:

- **Pest Control:** The excellent work of Unbugged, the Council's pest control service, has been recognised once again. Unbugged was awarded Killgerm's 'Local Heroes' award, and received recognition from the British Pest Control Association for adapting and continuing service delivery through the pandemic. (Concern about rats make up nearly half of all requests at 46%, then wasps at 28%)
- **Air Quality:** Our lead officer for Air Quality was instrumental in the development of the national Air Quality Hub, a technical information and knowledge resource for local authority professionals, funded by a grant from DEFRA. While the pandemic had a positive effect on air quality, with background and roadside levels of pollution falling significantly no data available yet for this year.
- **Tackling Food Poverty:** Our Public Health Project Officer was key in driving the development of the Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance's action plan, published in March. Partners including Morecambe Bay Foodbank, The Olive Branch (Faith in Action), Citizens Advice North Lancashire, Lancashire County Council, and local food clubs, and aims to ensure all residents have access to affordable, nourishing food.
- **Dog control:** Changes in legislation resulted locally in three Dog Control Orders being converted into a single Public Space Protection Order, covering issues like fouling, dogs on leads, dog ban areas etc. The dog warden and animal licensing team at Lancaster City Council has launched a special award designed to thank someone who has made an exceptional contribution to the welfare of dogs, in tribute Alison McGowan who worked for the city council for 24 years as a dog warden before retiring in April 2020. She tragically passed away the following month, with her loss mourned by her many friends and colleagues.
- **Taxi Licensing:** In light of updated DfT guidance all existing policies and application procedures in relation to the taxi trade have been reviewed and merged into a new single comprehensive policy document, currently under public and trade consultation, which covers licence vehicle specifications, licence conditions, requirements of licence holders. The service successfully applied for grant money to install vehicle charging points specifically for taxis and has held a number of workshops to support taxi operators in switching to electric vehicles. A handful of vehicles had screens fitted, and discussion on the use of the containment and outbreak management fund for a consistent approach across Lancashire are on-going.
- **Covid safe businesses:** Lancaster's covid safe award scheme continues to grow with around 130 businesses signed up, and a new 'Covid Safe PLUS' award being developed. This has been recognised as national good practice and presented at national conferences.
- **Ensuring Covid-Secure compliance:** A significant amount of work with businesses to keep the public safe and promote covid secure compliance has included over 2000 visits, over 7

days and evenings a week and responding to 900 advice requests. Enforcement action has included two direction orders to close businesses to keep the public safe.

Support for Food partnership: The Communities and the Environment directorate has supported the FoodFutures Partnership which has produced a draft 10 year food strategy covering a wide range of holistic and joined up food issues.

Support for Modal Shift to Active Travel

During the last 12 months City Council Officers have continued to work in partnership with Lancashire County Council to deliver the ambitions of the Lancaster District Highways and Transport Masterplan. This includes a vision of a district where sustainable transport options will be enhanced by the provision of improved bus, cycle and walking routes, particularly between the South Lancaster Strategic Growth Area and Lancaster City Centre.

- The County's **Lancaster City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy** Route Options Report was published for consultation in September 2020. The consultation revealed strong support for removing car-borne traffic on the eastern (Town Hall side) arm of the current gyratory network. It is pleasing to note that there was support for less traffic in the city centre and a focus on sustainable, active travel. From a City Council perspective, reducing vehicular traffic within the centre aligns with our Climate Emergency declaration. From a total of 8 different options, the 3 most-preferred routes have been shortlisted for detailed traffic modelling and public consultation. These are based on the eastern arm of the gyratory becoming prioritised for sustainable travel and the western arm (Castle side) having options for
 - two-way traffic for vehicles (Option 4)
 - *No through City Centre Traffic* allowing two way traffic for access with a section at China Street being fully pedestrianised (Option 6a)
 - *City Centre Clean Air Zone (CAZ)*, with a congestion charge for all vehicles travelling through the city centre except for exemptions. (Route 8a)

Modelling will include analysis of the impacts for servicing and deliveries for businesses; the potential for rat-running and mitigation; junction analysis and consideration of the proposed public realm infrastructure.

- The challenges of the pandemic have impacted upon transport, not least because of the fall in public transport patronage as a consequence of social distancing. City Officers worked alongside their County colleagues to deliver public realm change via the provision of pop-up, temporary cycling infrastructure. This has helped deliver partial segregation of routes for cyclists and has removed accident blackspots, such as the Queen Square/King Street junction in Lancaster. It also allowed the removal of vehicles from Dalton Square to accommodate the relocation of the Charter Market, which as a consequence is now becoming a destination in its own right.