

COUNCIL

Leader's Report

15 December 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

The minutes of the 26 October Cabinet will be considered at this meeting.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken in this period.

3.0 Leader's Comments

Since the last report we have had a particular emphasis on Covid, with extra work from City Council officers alongside NHS staff to promote vaccination and more recently the response to Omicron as a new variant. Our Covid figures continue to be quite high but in line with national figures: at county level the Lancashire Resilience Forum has stepped up its work on this aspect and held briefings for all leaders and county councillors.

There have been a number of by-elections since the last Full Council and we welcome four new councillors to our number: Cllr Askari, Cllr Blaikie, Cllr Hunter, and Cllr Taylor. I hope they feel comfortable in this new arena and supported as they take up their new responsibilities.

3.1 COP26/Environment

Lancaster City Council was a signatory to the Glasgow Declaration, an international commitment to tackle the climate emergency through integrated food policies. I welcomed attendees to the Real Northern Farming Conference held at the beginning of December online and in the Ashton Hall as it continued the work to transform the food systems locally and in the region. Thanks go to officers for continued involvement with the Food Partnership and for getting the Ashton Hall back into operation for public events.

Work has begun on creating a wide-reaching stakeholder partnership to further our work on reaching net zero in 2030 and building up the community engagement and wealth we will need to reach this objective as a district.

We have had a number of discussions with county as our direct partner in caring for the state of highways including our pavements. The portfolio holder for planning is taking our County Highways portfolio holder on a cycle ride round Lancaster so he can experience at first hand a number of our concerns. The Civic Society expressed its own concern for the infrastructure of Lancaster district through a press release and some very useful photographs. We are meeting with county officers and members in order to ensure we get a suitable investment in our infrastructure as well as a more integrated timetable for when we can expect the yearly maintenance cycle to take place

3.2 Cabinet

Cabinet has continued to work as reported last month on working through and establishing priorities for the next budget and discussing these and our financial situation with officers. We have had a briefing on the way social value has become part of our procurement process and also considered in detail both the development of housing on Mainway and the Skerton site and how it might be financed.

3.3 County

Establishing a basis for the “county deal” has continued to be the main focus. Leaders from district, county and unitaries have undertaken a series of discussion in order to reach a way of working that suits all parties. By the time of this Full Council, we should have more details of how this might be presented to all members and be considered at a Full council meeting.

3.4 Wider Community Matters

Remembrance Day services and events were well attended this year which brought a welcome feeling of normality and community togetherness. It was good to see Canon Leah Vasey-Saunders leading the service in Lancaster. In Morecambe Cllr Clifford stepped in to support because of a last-minute illness of one of the organisers.

The City Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Lancaster University to formalise a growing research partnership. This offers the city the interest and expertise of students and researchers whilst the university gains placements and opportunities for doing “real” research that can have direct effect on the district.

The Community Conversations team has held a meeting to review with community members the last programme and discover the gaps – we found a big one – young people and we hope to put that right in our next programme along with developing this engagement work. The Community Safety Partnership has been working on the Public Space Protection Orders being placed or replaced on areas where street drinking and antisocial behaviour have proved a challenge over the last two years.

3.5 HS2

We had asked the minister for HS2 for a meeting regarding the possible loss of direct service to Lancaster as a result of HS2. In response to our letter, we have had assurance that the HS2 plan does include direct service. However, our previous meeting with HS2 Ltd which involved looking in detail at the availability of services out of London leaves us with continued concern. We will continue to be raising awareness of the situation and all members are asked to support the work to retain our direct services as it goes forward.

3.6 Awards & Events

Both Lancaster and Morecambe BIDs showcased the excellence of our many businesses in their yearly events. I was lucky enough to be a judge on Lancaster awards and to attend the Morecambe dinner. The Morecambe event was a very enthusiastic evening which celebrated the life of Ken Allen but sadly heard the news of Cedric Robinson’s death too. Cedric was an Honorary Freeman and a fantastic character who will be much missed. I was also invited to be a judge of the annual LGIU awards for councillors and made a virtual presentation with many thanks to Cllr Thornberry who helped me do it. Light Up Lancaster was back this year with a great launch event and many people out to enjoy the installations all round the city. There was an impressive programme of events in Lancaster during the UN 16 days of Activism on Violence against Women and Girls, and I joined with many other women and some supporting men in the Reclaim the Night march around Lancaster. The Dukes Theatre put on a thought-provoking play “Belle and Mary” which gave a new view on how strong a part domestic abuse played in the Ruxton murders. A number of councillors supported this production – I hope many more will enjoy the Christmas production with their families.

3.7 Storm Arwen

Finally, Storm Arwen had a devastating effect on some of our biggest trees. I extend congratulations and thanks to the Council teams which went out immediately to clear debris from roads and paths to keep us safe.

4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 7 December 2021:

1. Public Space Protection Orders (note Call-in has been waived on this item)
2. Plan 2030 Priorities & Outcomes
3. Delivering our Priorities
4. Investing in the Future
5. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme
6. MTFS Update
7. Lancaster High Streets Heritage Action Zone – The Grand Theatre and public realm improvements
8. Proposal to purchase land adjacent to Mainway
9. Mayor’s transport and other Civic Matters

No Officer Delegated Key Decision has been taken since the last Leader’s report.

The following Individual Cabinet Member Decisions were taken since the last Leader’s report:

ICMD11	Glasgow Climate Declaration Decision Notice	Cllr Caroline Jackson
ICMD12	City Council Response To The Aldcliffe With Stodday Neighbourhood Plan	Councillor Gina Dowding
ICMD13	Memorandum Of Understanding With Lancaster University	Councillor Caroline Jackson

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda 26 October 2021