



## Leader's Report

13 November 2024

### 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

1.1 Information on Cabinet matters is provided in the minutes from the Cabinet meeting held 10 September.

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

2.1 No urgent Cabinet decisions have been taken since the last Leader's Report.

##### 3.0 Leader's Comments

3.1 Firstly I'd like to welcome the newest Member of our Council, Councillor Andrew Otway who represents Scotforth East. Congratulations to him for his success at the ballot box at the beginning of October.

Secondly, I would like to extend my thanks to Councillors Caroline Jackson and Jean Parr, and also Catherine Potter and Tim Hamilton-Cox, for the additional work they have undertaken at short notice to deputise for me over the last few weeks.

### **3.2 Frontierland**

On the 3rd of October we held a developer and investors event to attract partners to bring forward a development on the former Frontierland site in Morecambe. Supported by Place Northwest and local volunteers we hosted the event at the Wintergardens. The event attracted interest from an extremely diverse range of parties from local business owners, regional and national developers and leisure operators and even representation from international consortia and consultants. Our guests were given presentations by myself and Cllr Catherine Potter, officers of the Council Jonathan Noad and Tom Brown and a star turn from the Chair of the Eden Programme Board Sarah Walker-Smith. These presentations laid out the sparkling opportunity that Morecambe represents, the exciting prospects for our immediate future and the technicalities and mechanisms for procuring a development with us. Our agreed objectives for the site were shared, and our requirement for a leisure and hospitality led development made clear. Following presentations our guests were talking for walk along the prom in the sunshine, first to the Eden site and then to Frontierland itself.

Since this event feedback has been sought from participants and the competitive dialogue procurement process will begin shortly. When the process completes we will have worked with a successful partner to craft a development proposal which meets our objectives and delivers on our aspirations for Morecambe.

### **3.3 Local Government in Morecambe**

On the 18th we hosted the first ever Morecambe Summit: Local Government and Partnerships. This event was held at Morecambe town hall and brought together senior officers and politicians from our council and Morecambe Town Council to try to open lines of communication and explore route toward partnership delivery. Each council presented information about its structure, priorities and perspectives on local issues before workshopping key questions. These included identifying challenges, striving for impact and engagement with each other and wider systems. The event was a great success and both councils are discussing next steps, which will hopefully include formalising partnership working arrangements, perhaps with the signing of an MOU.

### **3.4 The Budget**

The new Labour Government released it's first budget since taking power on the 30th. Limiting our view to matters of key interest to ourselves as a district council, I highlight the following:

- An increase to our core spending power of 3.2%.
- An extension of both the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) until 2025-26.
- An extension of UKSPF into 2025-26, with a commitment to reform the wider local growth funding process beyond that. (N.B. the County Council have given a commitment that UKSPF will be delivered by districts in this coming cycle, not the CCA – which is excellent news.)

- Right to buy discounts have been reduced and authorities will now be able to retain 100% of receipts. (We lose roughly 20 council houses a year to right to buy purchases)
- Extra funding for the Affordable Homes Programme.
- A 5 year commitment for social housing rent settlement to be fixed at CPI+ 1%.
- Additional funds for homelessness prevention designed to relieve some pressure on the use of short term accommodation.
- Addition funding for the planning system and training and recruitment of planners.
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure business rates relief of up to 40%.
- Funding from the Extended Producer Responsibility packaging scheme to support waste reform.
- £3.4bn for Warmer Homes Plan to provide low income households with energy performance upgrades and low-carbon heating system for 350,000 properties nationwide.
- Measures to protect Council budgets from the increase to NI contributions, with further details expected with the local government finance settlement at the end of the year. Future settlements are promised to be multi-year in scope and will provide far greater budgeting surety and facilitate better long-term planning.

### **3.5 Eden**

I am delighted that the budget also confirmed the release of the full £50m of levelling up funds for Eden Project Morecambe. This follows the full business case passing through the MHCLG Investment Sub Committee and receiving a clean bill of health. A draft MOU for the funds has already been provided to the council and will be signed in due course. Work on the grant funding agreement between the city council and Eden continues.

This is a real milestone moment toward the delivery of Eden Morecambe and will signal to private investors, charities and philanthropist that they have the green-light to begin releasing funds pledged toward the match funding of the project.

### **3.6 Local Government Reform**

The upcoming English Devolution White Paper will set out more detail on the government's devolution plans, including on "working with councils to move to simpler structures that make sense for their local areas, with efficiency savings from council reorganisation helping to meet the needs of local people". This is widely interpreted as a further push toward unitarization of local authorities. We will once again need to advocate for our own best interests and strive to demonstrate the enormous good sense in our district looking to the North rather than to the South.

There has also been much talk of establishing new Mayoral regions in local government circles. Whilst this may be another topic of debate that lies in our

future (as it has so often in our past) we have had assurance from the County Council that no dialogue has been undertaken to bring this structure in concurrent with the formation of the CCA.

### 3.7 Local Business

My thanks go out to the Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce for inviting me to one of their regular meetings to meet their membership and discuss some of the exciting developments coming forward in our district.

### 3.8 Culture

Finally, I get to end on a note of extreme positivity! On the 3rd November Lancaster town hall provided the venue for this year's Communities Together Festival of Culture. This extraordinary event brought together all the diversity of our district, different nationalities and faiths, in a joyful celebration. Taking over the Ashton Hall as a performance space and dining room, the banqueting room and committee rooms filled with stalls and the council chamber became a place to go get your face painted or have henna applied to your hands! There was music and dance, fragrance and food, crafts, history, prayer. It was wonderful to see our stuffy civic spaces so transformed by all the colour and creativity. Hats off to the organisers – bravo!

## 4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 22 October 2024:

Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)
Renewal of Public Space Protection Orders
Adoption of Public Space Protection Orders (Dog Control)
Lancaster City Centre Draft Car Parking Strategy - Consultation Report Update and Strategic Parking Numbers
Capital Programme Mid-Year Review 2024/25
Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

No Officer Delegated Key Decisions have been taken since the last Leaders report.

The following Individual Cabinet Member Decision have been taken since the last Leader's report.

ICMD 8	Bar Supplies Contract Tender	Published on:22.10.24 Taken By: Cllr Catherine Potter
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ICMD 9	Procurement of HR and Payroll System	Published on:23.10.24 Taken By: Cllrs Tim-Hamilton Cox and Jason Wood
ICMD 10	Building Control Services Contract	Published on:25.10.24 Taken By: Cllr Jean Parr

### **Background Papers**

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 22 October 2024