



Leader's Report

18 June 2025

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 meetings held 11 February, 15 April and 20 May later in this agenda.

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 The last six weeks has been busy with many election events: at county level involving a complete change of administration, at district level a bye election, our installation of a new Mayor and the election of council Leader and committee chairs. We await the consequences of any change of direction at Lancashire County Council and warmly welcome Cllr Margaret Pattison as new Mayor.

3.2 Eden Morecambe Project.

This has been a busy six weeks with a number of briefings for cabinet and members and a very well attended Community Conversation at the Mazuma

stadium. The new Chief Executive Andy Jasper has announced the project is now in design development phase with images released of the intended development, the intention to return to Planning before the end of the year and work on the transport requirements undertaken by WSP. John Pye has joined the Eden team as Project Director and will be based in Morecambe for much of his time. Residents and businesses expressed concern in the Community conversation about transport matters and the project completion and opening date, now 2029, but welcomed the new team members.

3.3 Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Since the submission of the initial proposal from Lancashire in March there has been limited action whilst we awaited the delayed response from government. This has now arrived and post county election we are about to re-commence LGR meetings here in Lancaster and at District level. There are no new requirements in the letter from government except a suggestion that Neighbourhood Councils be developed to support resident engagement but a briefer email has more recently arrived suggesting that adult services should not be split between unitaries ahead of the Casey Commission. A recent MHCLG webinar suggested that whilst the original programme for LGR to be complete in Lancashire by 2028 is still in place civil servants are aware it might extend to 2029. The new county administration has declared its intention to hold a referendum on Devolution and latest government contact on the subject of a Lancashire Mayor no longer states its intention that the county should have mayoral elections in the coming year. We have met with possible unitary counterparts, Ribble Valley and Preston and chief executives from district authorities have continued to work on assembling the necessary information in order to support the November submission to government.

3.4 AI Growth Zone

Since the government announcement of its intention to set up AI Growth Zones there has been intense activity between local partners to draw together the essential elements of se-industrialised land, power connections, low carbon generation and the wider innovation and business interest to put in a firm bid by the end of May. It is a testament to local partners that this was achieved, and particular thanks go to Rich Grant from Milliamp for the time and expertise given to driving this project.

3.5 City Council Priorities

There has been a review of the work of the Fit For The Future groups which cover both budget concerns and development areas aligning within the Council Plan. New groups have commenced work related to the future use of AI, further digitalisation of services, Planning, Commercialisation and Williamson Park and Salt Ayre.

3.6 Cabinet Meetings

Cabinet has met formally twice in this period. It has taken advantage of fewer formal requirements to have a number of briefings to ensure work on priorities

goes ahead smoothly. In particular we have met with: Dr Andy Knox to gain fuller understanding of health inequalities, the changes to the health service and the role of the city council: with Paul Stubbins regarding the work of Audit Committee and audit concerns and with our Legal department regarding the new procurement legislation.

3.7 Assets and Development

City council officers and the Leader attended the Leeds UKREiiF conference to meet with current and prospective investors in the district and the wider northwest. There was notable interest in AI but also in Canal Quarter and possible sites allocated through the Local Plan. Internally, the work of the Assets Group continues to review the current state of our assets and ensure best use is made of them to support the work of the city council. Currently the market is being tested regarding the future of Ryelands House and we are expecting a decision in July as to its future. Work also on-going on the future of the Reebok building now returned to us. The disposal of Palatine House has been completed. Homes England officers visited Lancaster this month to talk with officers regarding a pipeline of housing sites but in particular support for the Skerton site build out. It appears there may be some support forthcoming for revenue as well as capital to enable councils to prepare to commence building, a matter on which our chief officer has done some vigorous lobbying. The completion of the small Alder Grove modern methods construction development has generated a good deal of interest including from Homes England, both in its construction, its A EPC and the internal design, the development is a testament to the vision and skills of officers and partner businesses.

3.8 Events, celebrations and achievements

We have had a lively six weeks. Perhaps for us as a council most notable has been achieving finalist position in a number of Municipal Journal Award categories including the coveted Local Authority of the Year award. Even to be nominated is a substantial achievement so congratulations to all of us - it really is a huge testament to the whole team of officers but also to every member for doing the work you do in wards, committees and boards with diligence and patience. Other notable events include the King's visit, the launch of the third round of the Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth commission which will include both Chief Executive and Leader as civic commissioners, attendance at both the Lancashire VE Day service and the flag raising at both town halls and the Leader's visit to the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment Heritage event in Liverpool. Carnforth held its Annual Meeting and it was a pleasure to be asked to speak, good too to see a Carnforth representative at the Eden Conversation eager to develop Carnforth's place as "Northern Gateway" to the attraction.

- 3.9 Overall, Mark Davies is a frequent promoter of our district as "punching above its weight", which interpreted means having high ambitions, working harder and faster than you could have thought possible and standing alongside partners who are deeply persuaded of the worth and value of our joint endeavour. Given all the difficulties life throws in our way at present, I hope in the next few weeks, members will take the opportunity to congratulate both themselves and any

officers with whom they have contact, for the undoubted achievements of Lancaster city council.

4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 20 May 2025

Government Waste Strategy Delivery
AI Growth Zone Collaboration Bid

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 3 June 2025

Projects and Performance Quarter 4 – 2024-25
Strategic Risk Register
Appointments to Outside Bodies
Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Portfolio Improvements - Design Development, Planning and Implementation
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 3c
Canal Quarter Regeneration Phase III (Heron Works) - Progressing Development Design, Planning Approval, and Delivery

No Officer Delegated Key Decisions have been taken since the last Leader's report.

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

ICMD 24	UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Grant Award. Theme: Employability and Support for Business	Published on 28.04.25 Taken by: Cllr Nick Wilkinson
ICMD 27	Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund	Published on 03.04.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline Jackson
ICMD 28	Halton-with-Aughton Neighbourhood Development Plan	Published on 11.04.25 Taken by: Cllr Sue Tyldesley
ICMD 29	Procurement of Refuse Collection Vehicles for Mixed Waste Collection	Published on 11.04.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart
ICMD 30	Procurement of a New Supplier of Liquid Fuel for Fleet Vehicles	Published on 17.04.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart
ICMD 32	Shopfronts and Advertisements Design Guide SPD	Published on 07.05.25 Taken by: Cllr Sue Tyldesley

ICMD 33	UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Grant Award. Theme: Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities	Published on 08.05.25 Taken by: Cllr Peter Jackson
ICMD 1	Decommissioning of Bridge House, Mainway, as a Council Dwelling Block	Published on 22.05.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline Jackson CALL-IN WAIVED
ICMD 2	Eden Project Morecambe – Appointment of Funding Monitor	Published on 27.05.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline Jackson CALL-IN WAIVED

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 20 May and 3 June 2025