



Leader's Report

23 July 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 meeting 3 June later in this agenda.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently.

- 2.1 The following decision has been taken during this period by the Chief Executive in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is being reported in accordance with Rule 16.02 Access to Information Rules.

UB138	Bridge House, Remediation of Defective Render	Published: 05.06.25 Call-in Waived
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Reason for Urgency: The need to undertake the work as quickly as possible due to the immediate risk to health & safety from falling render.

Further details can be found in the 8 July Cabinet papers.

3.0 Leader's Comments

Eden Morecambe Project.

- 3.1 We have welcomed John Pye to working out of Morecambe Town Hall and he has attended a number of local events. The work on travel planning has continued with the consultant WSP attending a Morecambe meeting to present progress so far.

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

- 3.2 Lancashire District Leaders have met on three occasions including a special face to face meeting in Chorley in order to agree and refine the position of districts. Chief Executives of the twelve districts have continued work to assemble the baseline information required to support decision-making for the November submission to government. Districts are not in full agreement, but it is accepted that we are likely to make a submission for a three or a four unitary split. The information will be made available to those wishing to establish any other re-organisation submission. Chief Executives have allocated work within their pan Lancashire team and prepared specifications for consultant support where necessary. The costs for this will be met by the government allocation of £300 000. Lancashire county council have suggested a two unitary submission.
- 3.3 At government level there has been more information regarding Neighbourhood Committees including that they would be funded and their responsibilities might include parks and youth work. Mayors are to be elected by SV rather than first past the post to have "the greatest possible democratic mandate." Local councils are no longer allowed to have the committee system. Whilst our submissions must be presented for November the Minister stated that the second tranche of councils to move to full devolution was waiting on the assent of the Treasury. Both our MPs were invited by us to a briefing regarding the current situation on LGR which Lizzi Collinge attended. There was a good discussion and we were interested to see MPs preferences for the division of Lancaster.

City Council Priorities

- 3.4 Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team have met to do a joint force field analysis of our situation regarding current priorities and to look at agreed ways of moving forward. There has been a briefing for all members on the new Fit For The Future groups and their remit. The importance of the benefits they should provide was discussed and officers are doing more work to make these clearer and more closely linked to savings or improved efficiency. The Fair Funding Review has now been confirmed which will change the way that the government revenue support grant is allocated to councils (it will be allocated according to need) as well as reset the business rates system. Both of these changes are likely to have consequences for city council funding. Briefings will be held with members as soon as there is more clarity about the situation.

Cabinet Meetings

- 3.5 Cabinet has met once with a very long agenda - details of the meeting are elsewhere in the report. Several cabinet briefings and informal meetings have taken place in order to refine and move forward papers coming to the early and late July cabinet.

Assets and Developments

- 3.6 Work is ongoing with assets, particularly the future use of Wilkos, and Ryelands House, and we are still hoping for a decision in July as to its future. The Social Housing Regulator called a meeting with the Housing team and portfolio holder regarding the state of our council housing and was happy enough to suggest a further meeting in three months. A similar team went to Bristol at the invitation of MIAA to meet the Bristol housing team and see a development of modern methods construction housing which was very impressive. Good links were forged and we hope to take advantage of advice from them on how to get council and affordable housing developed at greater pace in this district.

Events, celebrations and achievements

- 3.7 A small number of officers and members was privileged to attend the Municipal Journal Awards in London because of our finalist position in a number of categories. We were hugely pleased to win the award for Leadership in responding to the climate emergency. Congratulations to everyone involved for their hard work and outstanding achievement. It was also very satisfying to see the same team at work in Liverpool at the LGA Conference, presenting on our Climate Emergency Local Plan.
- 3.8 During Refugee Week the city council hosted Global Link's Escape to Safety installation and an evening public meeting to present the work of various groups in the district which support refugees and asylum seekers. The City Council supported and a number of members spoke at the Pride event in Lancaster and also attended Armed Forces Day in Morecambe. The Chief Executive and I attended the Local Government Association Conference and went to a number of useful presentations, particularly on health and social care. I was a panel member on a discussion of Devolution Prospects and Pitfalls and we both enjoyed attending our Climate team's presentation.
- 3.9 Finally, we were sad to have to say goodbye to Stephy Anderson who has been the Chief Executive and Leader's support and organiser for nearly seven years. Her successful effort to keep us in the right place at the right time and sort out the endless clashes has been fantastic. Moreover, her work since COVID for the well-being of the whole organisation had brought about a change in culture and attitudes and made everyone's life more kind and more healthy. Our loss is definitely ChipTech's gain.

Caroline Jackson

4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 8 July 2025

Establishment of Habitat Banks in Lancaster District
Local Government: Morecambe Town Council 'Memorandum of Understanding'
Local Government: Carnforth Town Council 'Memorandum of Understanding'
City Museum Redevelopment
Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy
Reporting in of Urgent Business
Electric Vehicle Charging Hub
Salt Ayre Data Centre
Lancaster Canal Quarter Early Phase Housing Proposals – Progress Update and Future Delivery
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 3	Sustainable Food Places Gold Award	Published on 29.05.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart
ICMD 4	Procurement of Leasehold Furniture Supplier to Council Housing Tenants	Published on 04.06.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline Jackson
ICMD 5	Skerton House Passenger Lift Modernisation	Published on 09.06.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline Jackson
ICMD 6	Procurement of Road Sweeping Vehicles for the Cleansing Department	Published on 17.06.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart
ICMD 8	Green Ayre Improvement Programme	Published on 17.06.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 8 July 2025