



Leader's Report

24 September 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 held 18 July 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 Below is my Leader's report covering the two months since last Full Council. This summer has continued with very little let up to council business, so I hope everyone had a chance to get away, have a rest and recharge their batteries. My apologies if I have left anything of significance out - please follow up with me in questions.

Eden Morecambe Project.

- 3.2 This month has seen some significant progress; recruitment commenced for five posts to work with John Pye out of Morecambe Town Hall. There were diggers on the site drilling exploratory holes to ascertain the circumstances for

the foundations. The latest Eden Project Community Conversation at Lancaster and Morecambe College attracted a good audience with plenty of searching questions. I had the opportunity to visit Eden in Cornwall and meet some of those who work there. And also to meet with John Pye to ask follow-up questions.

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

- 3.3 Work has continued over the summer at District and Joint Leaders level to refine the unitary offers. It is now established that there will be proposals for two, three, four and five unitary splits of the Lancashire area. Blackpool has proposed a variation on the four-way split. The Pan-Lancashire consultation has been agreed between all authorities and is now live; we urge all councillors to respond to it. The two sets of consultants working on the data have reported preliminary findings to all council leaders - this data is being fed into the submissions for each proposal and will be further refined by consultants working with the interested parties to each proposal.
- 3.4 Our own LGR working group has met formally and informally to work on creating a Lancaster district-based consultation survey. My thanks to members of all parties who put time and energy into questions we could all agree to and officers who have worked on effective ways to ask those questions. It was very difficult to create questions that asked for real choices that indicate the way residents feel without giving them answers or revealing our own bias. Our own survey should begin on 22 September and we urge you to share the link widely. Paper copies will be available.
- 3.5 Stake holders in the district have asked for more information on the process and we have attended meetings organised by the Chamber of Commerce and CVS to answer questions from their members.
- 3.6 On wider devolution matters, I have attended the first Combined Authority Scrutiny Board meeting as one of two District council members who observe. The committee contains a limited number of members with scrutiny experience and has no established Chair as yet. We were disappointed as a committee to find our next meeting was the day before the actual Combined Authority meeting and we were only due to see the final Lancashire Growth Plan at that point. In the event our meeting was cancelled and the Growth Plan went forward without scrutiny.

City Council Priorities

- 3.7 Cabinet and Senior Leadership team continue to look at council priorities and have looked both at the successes in recent years and at how processes might be speeded up by closer working. There are a number of areas that need close attention with the prospect of re-organisation in mind. We have met with members of local organisations to progress the Cultural Strategy as one key priority and also had a very helpful discussion with Prof Vanessa Toulmin on the factors for success in the Winter Gardens project. We are also continuing

developmental work with consultants on the Economic Strategy which now takes local prosperity and inclusive growth as its key theme.

Cabinet Meetings

- 3.8 Cabinet has met twice - details of the meeting are elsewhere in the report. A number of cabinet briefings and informal meetings took place to prepare for both July and September. We are grateful to the Finance team for support over the Medium-Term Financial Strategy refresh.
- 3.9 Cllr Hamilton cox and I attended the Shared Services meeting in Preston for Revenues and Benefits to review current progress with Preston members and officers. We were pleased with progress on collection rates and in particular on commitment to paperless billing which could present significant savings to both authorities. Can we urge you to do this if you haven't already. - city council link [here](#).

Assets and Developments

- 3.10 Work has continued with assets through the OBR Assets group and officers led by Jo Wilkinson. Ryelands House continues to be near completion and we are now expecting an in-principle decision on its future by the end of August. We are tendering for a developer for Centenary House in Morecambe. The Frontierland board will be coming back to cabinet with a recommendation for next steps by the end of this month. Circumstances following the closure of the Williamson Park Cafe improved over the summer with the opening of cabins to serve hot drinks and a covered outdoor seating area. Planning permission for the demolition of the former cafe is in progress and plans are being brought to the Williamson Park Fit for the Future group for a replacement building.
- 3.11 The section of the Canal Quarter in private hands has seen several developments over the summer. The owners served notice of necessary demolitions to dangerous buildings under the Building Act, in particular covering the Mitchells Yard area and buildings to the rear of Moor Lane and St Leonardgate. Cabinet members, mindful of residents past work to preserve valuable structures in the area, visited with the owner. There will be a further request for Planning Permission to demolish other structures which will come to Planning Committee.
- 3.12 During the summer there were further fires on the former Supaskips site and some shocking pictures of young people entering the site and climbing on the roof. Energetic work by Planning officers has persuaded owners to make improvements to the perimeter fencing and remove the internal stairs to the fire escape to prevent access to the roof. We were disappointed to see the former owner's sentence for the offences related to the Supaskips site and business and have appealed to the Attorney General for a review.

Events, community matters, celebrations and achievements

- 3.13 Our joint work with the county council on community identity, “Who we are” is continuing - my thanks to members and officers. This project was a response to last year’s community conflicts and has become more necessary and pointed in view of the recent roundabout graffiti and the attack on asylum seekers in Carnforth. Our Chief Executive has pressed Lancashire on the need to remove the graffiti alongside other district officers. In this connection, I will mention the Chief Executive's annual appraisal and say that we expressed our gratitude for the continued high level of achievement by Mark and his team in forwarding the needs and aspirations of our district on so many fronts.
- 3.13 VJ Day proved a big event in our district with possibly the biggest turnout in the county at the morning service in Morecambe and a Lancashire-wide celebration and multi-faith meditation in the evening at the behest of the Lord Lieutenant, led by the Bishop of Lancaster. Cllr Bannon and I were privileged to be asked to speak to represent local family connections with VJ Day itself.
- 3.14 Finally, having started in Morecambe, I will finish in Morecambe. Anxiety over the future of Morecambe Football Club was palpable over the summer across the district and it was with huge relief and hope that we heard the news that the takeover by Panjab Warriors had been approved in mid-August.

4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 16 September 2025

Annual Complaints Report
Renewal to Regulation 7 Direction under Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulation 2007
Adoption of Conservation Area Appraisals for and boundary changes to Over Kellet, Whittington and Yealand Conyers & Redmayne conservation areas
Projects and Performance: Q1 2025-26
Strategic Risk Management
Delivering Our Priorities: Q1 2025/26 (
Capital Programme Mid-Year Review 2025/26
Council Housebuilding Support Fund
Appointments to Outside Bodies
Centenary House (Former Co-op Building), Morecambe: Procurement of a Preferred Developer Partner

The following Officer Delegated Key Decisions have been taken since the last Leader’s Report

ODD1	Re-Roofing of Various Flat Blocks on Vale, Greaves and Hala Estates	Published on 28.08.25
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The following Individual Cabinet Member Decisions have been taken since the last Leader's report.

ICMD 7	Procurement of 240 Litre Recycling Bins with Yellow & Red Lids	Published on 15.07.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart
ICMD 9	Alarm Monitoring Infrastructure Service and Maintenance: Procurement and Total Value Approval	Published on 23.06.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline Jackson
ICMD 10	UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Grant Award. Theme: Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities	Published on 07.07.25 Taken by: Cllr Martin Bottoms
ICMD 11	Rural England Prosperity Fund 2025-26 Grant Awards.	Published on 24.07.25 Taken by: Cllr Peter Jackson

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 16 September 2025