



Leader's Report

17 December 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 21 October 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 This month's report falls into five clear areas, dominated, of course, by Local Government Reorganisation and the run up to the budget. Alongside those came progress with partnership work across the district, cabinet matters and a number of significant events. Sadly, those included the well-attended funeral of former councillor Darren Clifford at St Peter's Cathedral.

- 3.2 The five final proposals for **Local Government Reorganisation** in Lancashire were submitted for the government deadline, 28th November. Much of November was taken up with briefings as the Four Unitary model was published. The Cross-Party Working Group met to consider the proposal submission, the best organisation for the Extraordinary Council and the

timetable of work for the coming six months up until the announcement in June. Briefings were also held for Overview and Scrutiny committee and for all councillors. A number of councillors of all parties also supported a session for students at Lancaster university. The Extraordinary Council was marked by an impassioned debate from councillors across the political groups illustrating just how much this council cares about the future of our place, the future of democracy and the essential relationship of residents to councillors. The Four Unitary proposal was clearly carried with a number of abstentions. Cabinet, sitting at the rise of Full Council, endorsed the decision of councillors in Extraordinary Council.

- 3.3 Budget** news nationally suggests that the final settlement for the district will not be adverse but there is still major uncertainty over the business rates reset. There is continued funding from the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme, but this partly depends upon levels of recycling which need to improve. The partial roll out of the new style recycling bins should affect this and we look forward to the collection figures for the next quarter. Cabinet has had initial briefings on the HRA budget and General Fund revenue and capital position for the council. There remains a funding gap of over £1 million to bridge in the council budget and cabinet members will continue to work on the budget alongside officers until the end of the week before Christmas. Members have received an initial briefing and are welcome to request further briefings for members as a whole. The Local Government Association is running a number of courses, most of them free, regarding the current financial issues, the use of data and performance and I recommend members access their website or talk with their party office if these are matters on which they feel the need of more training. In addition, if members have particular skills in this area, they can volunteer to be peer members and support other councils.
- 3.4 Cabinet** members have completed a review of their portfolios and priorities after one year in office, noting significant progress in terms of Canal Quarter, renewable energy generation, superfast broadband, Bio Diversity Net Gain, affordable housing, Tenant Satisfaction Survey scores, Ryelands House, parking strategy, ANPR installation, new waste collection and fly-tipping strategy, assets review, Frontierland and the City Museum project and many others. Cabinet members would like to express their deep appreciation of officers who have put so much energy and expertise into achieving these and many more improvements for local residents. Regular joint meetings with Senior Leadership team now take place and these have led to closer sharing of priorities in relation to the Council Plan and the opportunity to refine those priorities in the light of Local Government Reorganisation timelines. Cabinet members have been introduced to the use of AI via the opportunity to use Co-Pilot. Whilst appreciating the benefits of AI, cabinet members are also sensitive to the possible drawbacks and following a nuanced briefing with officers will be looking at the need for further governance through the formation of an AI Governance Board.
- 3.5 Partnerships** continued to be a theme of the work of cabinet and officers following the peer challenge recommendation. This month saw the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the City Council and Carnforth Town Council. The two councils already work effectively together particularly on

Public Realm matters. The MOU will establish a regular pattern of meetings and establish a dynamic action plan to take forward matters of particular concern to Carnforth residents. It was good to see a number of members and the proper officer from Carnforth Town council at the event; and I would share Cllr Jim Grisenthwaite's hope that this was an opportunity to "better address shared priorities and to respond to future challenges and opportunities together." On the same theme the Chief Executive and I attended the Civic Universities workshop which brought together councils and institutions across the region to look at an encompassing vision and the actions to be taken to reach that goal. Current priority plans in several areas are also dependant on partnership opportunities. We have undertaken Pre-Market Engagement on possible Canal Quarter housing development and are moving on to considering tendering, whilst on Skerton and Mainway we are awaiting the conclusion of the Pre-Market Engagement. Frontierland progress is moving forward with the developer intending to bring forward more detailed work in the spring.

- 3.6 Other partnership events this month included Light Up Lancaster which attracted over ninety-two thousand visitors to the amazing light shows and interactive installations. All credit goes to the team of organisers for creating what is now a premier northwest event. Post-event meetings have already discussed the future funding landscape in order to look to replace UKSPF funding which has been ended by government. As BID members I was also privileged to join the judging team for the BID Awards and to attend the ceremony in the Ashton Hall. The event was a relaxed and friendly celebration of the many businesses operating in the BID district and showcased the entrepreneurial spirit and sheer hard work that goes into establishing and maintaining local businesses.
- 3.7 Finally, in terms of partnerships I would like to commend the way councillors cross-party and especially those on the Business Committee, alongside portfolio holder Mandy Bannon, have come together with affected families and the local MP to ensure Lancashire County Council understands the huge value of Vale View to the district as a whole. We look for an outcome to the consultation that ensures a continuation of services at Vale View or in equally local and suitable accommodation.
- 3.8 This month has included a number of notable local **events**, some of which have already been mentioned. The Light Up festival was followed, in an extremely speedy turnaround in Lancaster, by the Remembrance services and parades across the district. These had high levels of attendance and were very impressive. I was privileged to be one of the readers at the Priory service alongside Mayor Margaret Pattison and it was good to meet representatives of the different veterans' associations afterwards. I was privileged also to speak alongside MP Paula Baker at the DepFest Housing event in Manchester which focused particularly on the lived experience of children in temporary accommodation. I look forward with her to the delayed publication of the government Homelessness Strategy and real note being taken of children's experience. I attended alongside a number of councillors, the Festival organised by CVS to showcase and support the work of the third sector without whom the district would be a poorer and more difficult place particularly for those who are the poorest and most vulnerable. I also represented the

council at the Choir of the Year competition organised by Lancashire County which was an uplifting event featuring a number of Lancaster choirs and enough to inspire anyone to join a choir.

- 3.9 To return finally to the funeral of former councillor Darren Clifford. It was a sad occasion but good to see many family and friends as well as councillors and representatives of city and county coming to pay their respects. For me it was thought provoking - we often disagree as councillors and it is in the nature of politics that we see ourselves in groups with differing values. The service told me so much about Councillor Clifford, all the things he had done and had achieved in his life, and I was glad to understand more of what had motivated him to become a councillor.

4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 2 December 2025

Fly Tipping Strategy
Lancaster Business Improvement District - Renewal Ballot and Draft Delivery Plan Proposal
Lancaster City Council's Progress to Net Zero
Establishment of a Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group
Local Council Tax Support Scheme (2026/27)
Delivering Our Priorities: Q2 2025/26
Projects and Performance: Q2 2025-26
Strategic Risk Register
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update
Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2025/26
Lift Modernisation & Associated Works
Eden Project - Grant Funding Agreement Variation
Lancaster Canal Quarter Early Phase Housing Proposals - Progress Update and Delivery

There have been no Officer Delegated Key Decisions taken since the last Leader's Report

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

ICMD 14	Scotforth Rural Neighbourhood Development Plan	Published on 24.10.25 Taken by: Cllr Sue Tyldesley
ICMD 15	Commercial Property Disposal, Lancaster	Published on 20.11.25 Taken by: Cllr Tim Hamilton-Cox.
ICMD 16	Approval To Enter into S101 Agreement with Lancashire County Council to Continue to	Published on 21.11.25 Taken by: Cllr Caroline

	Deliver Minor Adaptations	Jackson
ICMD 17	Public Litter Bin Replacement Program	Published on:25.11.25 Taken by: Cllr Paul Hart

Background Papers

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 2 December 2025