



Leader's Report

25 February 2026

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 13 January 2026 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 focus of the early part of this month has been the final budget received by cabinet and then tonight's Full Council. The requirements of Local Government Re-organisation and the development of partnership working have been other key items in our work. We heard the sad news of former councillor Mike Greenall's death and send our sympathies to his family and friends.

Budget matters

3.2 Officers have continued to work hard to take all elements of the government settlement into account to produce the final balanced budget for Full Council approval. This was presented to Budget and Performance Panel where

members raised a number of interesting questions but there were no further recommendations. Whilst the settlement overall was positive for Lancaster district this year, looking ahead the three year guarantee will be eroded by inflation and will require further efficiencies and revenue raising if we are to meet our service needs. Members received a detailed briefing from Housing and Finance officers on the Housing Revenue Account budget. This detailed the work that has gone into current and former years accounts to further recognise capital spending and rebalance the revenue account and the viability of the HRA this year and in future years.

Local Government Re-organisation

- 3.3 The government consultation for Lancashire is available here <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/lancashire-blackburn-with-darwen-blackpool/> and all members are urged to view it and record their preferences. It is very long but please note that you do not need to respond to all five proposals and that there is a free comment box on each of them, not simply tick boxes. If you are a member of an organisation potentially affected by LGR please ask its Chair/lead to comment: the consultation is particularly aimed at stakeholders. The LGR Working Party continues meeting and has particularly focused on a possible Governance Review of the district in order to offer parishing to the currently unparished areas. Officers have warned that this is complex and expensive but members are aware that in terms of loss of local voice and democracy, we need to look at the future needs of all residents. At district level, the twelve district leaders alongside our CEOs are working to ensure proper representation within the transition process, now the new LGR Programme Director is in place. In preparation for the requirements of the future unitary district councillors will need knowledge of Adult Care services in particular so it was good to see Overview and Scrutiny hosting the Lancashire Director of Adult Services to discuss their CQC report this month. Our Chief Executive is in discussion with other local unitaries about briefings on future responsibilities. Please do express your interest in any future briefings through your Working Group representative.

Housing

- 3.4 The housing team has been particularly busy recently with budget matters as discussed previously but also in the area of homelessness. The stakeholder meetings currently in place began in lockdown and not kept pace with changes so these have been re-organised into a strategic Advisory Group and operational level Co-ordinators Group to work on the revised Homelessness Strategy. A small group of officers, members and local partners also met as a roundtable to discuss matters of equality and race in homelessness in the district. The discussion was thoughtful and enlightening and thanks go to Jo Wilkinson for creating the opportunity. Finally the Council Housing team has received the news that there will be an inspection by the Social Housing Regulator of Lancaster district in April. This is the equivalent of an OFSTED inspection and despite the excellent groundwork already done in Housing will require a good deal of concentrated work over the next month from all the officers involved in that team.

Wider/regional matters

- 3.5 The North West Regional Leaders group met with Louise Gittins Chair of the LGA, mainly about the advantages of LGR, the new Mayoral organisation and SEND and Adult Service reforms. There was an enlightening presentation on Ending Extraction in the UK Care System from Julian Boys and I recommend looking up their report <https://publication.cles.org.uk/ending-extraction-in-the-uk-care-system>. Their work was done in the north east and Yorkshire. Members for the north west area were keen to know the level of funding extracted here. Concern was expressed from all areas about the effect of changes to the Police. Cllr Merry, Chair of Key Cities, met the Leader to discuss future developments particularly the effect of LGR on a Key City's ability to act in areas which are joining into one unitary.

Partnership work

- 3.6 Local Churches recently held a Gathering to support the work of local organisations including local government. It was enlightening to hear in the short videos presented by Yak Patel, Mark Davies and Dr Andy Knox, what a clear message of concern for unity, support to the vulnerable and community cohesion was presented by all three leaders. The Civic Universities group has met to finalise its vision and move into decisions about future action with a focus on volunteering, research projects, skills mapping in education, coastal town investment, community cohesion and leadership. The Lancaster District Strategic Partnership met and spent some time in workshopping future economic development through Arts and Culture. Key elements included developing values, celebrating local cultures and neighbourhoods, creating local apprenticeships, increasing the power of the local Arts Partnership and maximising the use of Heritage assets.

District activity

- 3.7 The Eden application for Planning Permission is being decided as I write. If it passes there will be a period of twelve weeks as we wait for the Judicial Review period to conclude. Following that all elements required to set the project moving on site in Morecambe should be in place. The Chinese New Year celebrations for the Year of the Fire Horse took place in Lancaster with the customary painting the eyes in the dragon. Our thanks go to the two young entrepreneurs, Josh and Percy, who do the work to make it happen each year and the support from the Chinese community at Lancaster University in particular. The Millennium Bridge was 25 years old this month and our Planning policy and Museums team celebrated by bringing children from Grosvenor Park to learn about the Lancaster bridges and make their mark through litter picking and bulb planting. The bridge itself and the whole River Lune millennium project have stood the test of time and are a timely reminder alongside the Eden North project, of the importance of district councils in creating place.



Caroline Jackson

4.0 Decisions

The following decisions were scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 10 February 2026

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| Adoption of Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape Management Plan |
| Budget and Policy Framework General Fund Revenue Budget 2026/27 - 2030/31 |
| Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2035/36 & Capital Strategy (Investing in the Future) |
| Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 |
| Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 - 2030/31 |
| Housing Revenue Account Budget Framework 2026/27 - 2030/31 |
| Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2026/27 |
| Delivering our Priorities 2025/26 Q3 |

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.

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| ICMD 25 | To grant approval to rent out Ridge Community Centre for a period of 5 years to provide community facilities and activities that benefit the Ridge and wider community. | Published on: 10.2.26 Taken By: Cllr Martin Bottoms |
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Background Papers

Cabinet agenda of the meeting held on 10 February 2026