

Report of:	To:	Date
Councillor David Henderson, Leader of the Council	Council	7 July 2022

### Executive Report: Leader of the Council

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on a number of issues, as set out below.

#### 2. Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

- 2.1 The District Councils Network have produced a paper which provides an initial briefing on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill with web links to the Bill, guidance and supporting documentation from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This will be sent out with the Members' Newsletter and I would encourage all Members to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Bill.
- 2.2 The Bill is a very wide-ranging piece of legislation, almost every chapter and clause is relevant to district councils and wider local government. However, key components are devolution, finance and planning.
- 2.3 **Devolution:**  
This is the most concerning part of the Bill as it would give effect to the devolution framework outlined in the Levelling Up White Paper – which explicitly denies district councils the right to be full members of a Combined County Authority and relegates districts to non-constituent members without voting rights. This fundamentally impacts on the current work of Lancashire Leaders on a County Deal and I will update Members as and when this matter progresses.
- 2.4 **Finance:**  
The creation of additional powers to charge a council tax premium on second homes and long-term empty homes will be fully evaluated and be the subject of a future report should it be considered appropriate to bring forward related proposals.
- 2.5 **Planning:**  
The new reform package is a vast improvement on the 2020 Planning White Paper. Previous proposals for zoning and automatic permissions have been dropped. The Government is reasserting and enhancing the status of local plans at the heart of the planning system and the fact that we have an up to date local plan will stand us in good stead for the future.

- 2.6** There are plenty of measures which appear positive on paper. These include: Enhanced status for local plans and a more streamlined plan-making process; simpler neighbourhood planning statements; stronger compulsory purchase powers for regeneration; stronger powers to drive developers to build out e.g. through commencement and completion notices and stronger enforcement powers.

### **3. Lancashire Leaders**

- 3.1** Lancashire Leaders met on 16 June 2022 and at that meeting we discussed a number of issues including Lancashire 2050 (L2050). I have reported previously that on 6 April 2022 Lancashire Leaders and CEOs met to explore and capture what is important in developing a shared vision and ambition for L2050 and agree the set of priority areas.

- 3.2** At the meeting of 16 June Leaders agreed to:

Note the collated findings from the Leader/CEO workshop;  
Approve the revised characteristics of L2050 including the updated priority areas (of which there are 8) and note the proposed timeline for developing L2050;  
Note how feedback is shaping the L2050 Plan.

- 3.3** Leaders have previously agreed to play an active role in the development of the L2050 Priority Areas and at the meeting it was agreed that a Leader/Local Authority Senior Member will be appointed for each priority area and the appointed Lead Member will be supported by a Lead CEO and Lead officers and when concluded I will update Members.

### **4. Queen's Jubilee**

- 4.1** In early June numerous events took place to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee from beacon lighting to street parties and I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers at Wyre, Parish and Town Councils, Voluntary Groups and Residents for organising and holding such a superb variety of celebratory events.

### **5. Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Economic Prosperity Board**

- 5.1** The Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Economic Prosperity Board met on 9 June 2022. The Annual report of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was well received and the report covered a number of areas as follows.

- 5.2** **Laying foundations for future growth:** To help drive our post-Covid recovery, the LEP has over the last year developed a series of initiatives and funding strategies to stimulate growth.

- 5.3** **Supporting Lancashire's businesses:** Supporting our businesses at a grass roots level has continued to be a key priority. Lancashire's Boost Business Growth Hub service - which typically helps around 1,000 businesses each year - delivered a full range of services despite the lockdown.

- 5.4 Investing in skills and training:** Skills and training has remained a core priority for the LEP this year. Following consultation with employers, training provider and stakeholders, a refresh of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework was published. This responded to the impacts of the pandemic in addition to progress made since its first publication in 2016.
- 5.5 A partnership approach:** The LEP works in partnership with many local stakeholders including all of Lancashire's local authorities, Chambers of Commerce and business networks. Lancashire's MPs, our universities and colleges and many other agencies, Institutions and organisations, are also all valued partners.
- 5.6** The Board received the report "Addressing Emissions Across the Fylde Coast" on 9 September 2021, as a result of which they agreed to act as an influencer and enabler regarding the green agenda across the Fylde Coast on issues relating to the economy.
- 5.7** This role requires a focus on two related concepts:
- **Climate Change Mitigation** - measures to avoid and reduce carbon-based emissions, for example through generating "clean" energy (i.e. where the production of energy minimises or eliminates emissions with an adverse impact on climate change). The Fylde Coast has numerous businesses operating in this field, which present an economic opportunity alongside the environmental imperative, and;
  - **Climate Change Adaptation** - an acceptance that changing weather and environmental conditions (such as rising sea levels and temperatures, more intense rain, stronger winds and so on) mean that society has to put in place measures to address this. This could include improved sea defences and designing buildings differently. These are measures which are essential for our economy to continue to operate efficiently.
- 5.8** The Board requested that green local projects and businesses across the Fylde Coast that need funding be identified, in order to match up opportunities and ensure resilience. As a result, a group of officers from Fylde, Wyre and Blackpool Councils covering climate change and economic development has been convened to discuss ideas and potential projects. The group presented an update on progress at the meeting and it was agreed that officers should prepare a prioritised list of projects addressing these issues across the Fylde Coast.

### **Local Full Fibre Network Update**

- 5.9** At a previous meeting the board was informed of the development of a Full Fibre network that was funded by a £3million grant by DCMS to create a fibre backbone along the Fylde Coast using a ducting asset in the Tramway. The grant was also used to extend the Fibre backbone into the two Enterprise Zones on the Fylde Coast and was further supplemented by retained business rates to ensure the Fibre network reached the Hill House Enterprise Zone. The Board received a progress update on the rollout of digital infrastructure on the Fylde Coast. Several co-operative members are active in offering services to businesses in

Wyre. Recent contact has also been made with the co-op by a consultant working on the Cleveleys town centre regeneration.

### **Hillhouse Enterprise Zone (EZ)**

- 5.10** NPL (site owners) have secured funding from the Getting Building Fund toward the costs of essential infrastructure upgrades to enable new speculative development to progress. The project tackles a requirement for some urgent upgrading and repair to ageing enabling infrastructure, including site access road, utilities, and an extension and repair to the water ring main and electricity supply mains. It will also incorporate the extension of the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) super-fast broadband in a ring around the site, linking to the recently completed LFFN extension of the Fibre from the Tramway to the Hillhouse gatehouse.
- 5.11** Hillhouse EZ was also represented under the Blackpool Makes it Work campaign banner at UK REiiF (Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum) in Leeds, May 2022, where there were opportunities to promote investment across the two active Fylde Coast EZs.

## **6. Comments and Questions**

- 6.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 any member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with Procedure Rule 11.5.