

It's a busy time right now at the council, with Cabinet, scrutiny and numerous other panels all in full swing after the recent elections.

At Cabinet last week we agreed a new Housing Strategy, and also a new Highways Strategy to set out how we will work to improve local transport infrastructure in the years ahead.

More than £20m will be invested in high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, and £10m will go towards transport improvements in St Helens town centre as part of our once in a lifetime regeneration plans.

Both the Housing Strategy and our highways and transport investment support the aims set out in the St Helens Borough Local Plan and our town centre regeneration plans, which are also specifically on the agenda at this week's Cabinet when we'll discuss two Levelling Up funding bids we're making to government and the final version of the Local Plan which I wrote about in some detail last week.

Also on this week's Cabinet agenda is our latest review from the independent Local Government Association, and it contains positive news – they have found that our council continues to make good progress, acknowledging that we're in a very different place to where we were in 2019 before I became Leader and a new generation took over. Credit, as always, goes to my Cabinet and Labour Group colleagues and of course our amazing council keyworker staff.

We do all we can to make the work that goes on at the town hall transparent and accessible to residents. Many meetings are livestreamed, and you can find links to that and all the agendas and reports at sthelens.gov.uk.

Last week was Refugee Week, and there were many events held to mark the occasion. I was honoured to take part in a football match between councillors and refugees, which was played in great spirit.

Another fantastic community event takes place this Saturday with the return of St Helens Pride, the first since 2019.

Held in St Helens town centre, the event will see live stage performances in Church Square and entertainment at the Citadel as well as a Pride parade walk and activities hosted by St Helens Library at the World of Glass. Thank you to all the organisers and I hope all those taking part have a wonderful afternoon!

Best wishes to all Star readers.