

Executive Annual Report 2016/17

Councillor Blamire

**Leader and Cabinet Member for Relationships with other Councils,
Communications, Performance Management, Democratic Services, Legal
and HR**

Executive Membership

- **Cabinet** (Chairman)
- **Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Museums Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee**

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- **Community Safety Partnership** (Substitute)
- **Lancashire Leaders Meeting**

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Relationships with other Councils, Communications, Performance Management, Democratic Services, Legal and HR

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures

| Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes | Success Measures |
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| Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve performance and effectiveness of partnerships in delivering corporate priorities.• Improve neighbourhood working by engaging with communities to understand their needs and build resilience. |
| Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrate good | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain an 'unqualified' value for money conclusion from our External Auditors. |

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| governance, openness and transparency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Localised Council Tax Benefits Support Scheme (LCTS) to determine a sustainable scheme for the future. • Act on the government's future roll-out of universal credit in the district and other welfare reforms. • Review and rationalise the Council's future accommodation needs to support service delivery and save money. |
| Maintain a financially stable position and strong financial forecast for the delivery of Council services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement agreed budget proposals and take positive action where they do not deliver desired outcomes. • Develop and implement a range of further savings and income generation opportunities to sustain the Council's budget. |
| Sustainable economic growth and jobs will be created in key sectors including energy, knowledge, health and the visitor economy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine Lancaster district's contribution to the emerging concept of the Northern Powerhouse. • Improve local conditions for business growth and skills development. |

Progress made during 2016/2017

Communications

Through its communications and marketing operations the city council has taken an active role in promoting the district across a wide range of activities, handling press and other media enquiries effectively and supporting elected members with communications expertise.

In supporting other services of the council, the communications and marketing team has provided expertise to support their operational activities and the development of new projects.

The team has also dealt with a number of film enquiries, including national TV programmes Cold Feet, Great British Castles and Don't Tell the Bride.

The council's website was relaunched in 2016 with additional functionality as the council looks to continue the move towards having more of its communications online. Since relaunching the website has received 433,000 unique visitors with 2.7 million total views.

Performance Management

- Cabinet (collectively and individually) and the Council's scrutiny function received regular reports on the Council's financial performance, progress made in delivering savings, income generation and the delivery of key projects. These reports allowed Elected Members to request further information on specific areas of interest and concern.
- The Council's scrutiny function had the opportunity to review the performance of the portfolios of all Cabinet Members during the course of the year, through the invitation of Cabinet Members to the meeting.
- Work is currently taking place to review the Council's corporate plan.
- It is essential that the key indicators of performance of the Council are presented in a clear, meaningful and user-friendly way. Work is well underway to achieve that.
- In order to address the Council's financial challenges much work is taking place to look at projects that generate income. However, the drive to continually improve services and thus generate efficiencies still continues. There are many excellent examples of where our services are delivering the same or even better outcomes through use of new technology, modernising working practice and learning from other organisations. It is essential that we continue to improve and resources are allocated to ensuring this happens

Democratic Services

The big focus for Democratic Services during 2016/17 was preparation for the EU referendum held on 23 June 2016. This poll was a major national event and the subject of great media attention before polling day, and since. To add to the challenge,

Democratic Services also had to deliver a poll to elect Lancashire's Police and Crime Commissioner in May 2016, so it was an extremely busy few months for the whole team.

Aside from elections, work went on to provide a full programme of Mayoral and Civic events which included the Mayor attending the opening of the Bay Gateway link road on 02 March 2017 by the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire, Lord Shuttleworth, and unveiling a 'time capsule' in Marketgate, Lancaster. The team also worked alongside other services to reinstate Lancaster Town Hall Tours. The servicing of Committees, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny continued as usual.

Legal Services

Legal Services have continued to support the good governance of the Council, by providing legal and procedural advice to Services in their operational activities, and to officers and members in the decision making process.

Legal Services have been involved in the contractual side of the Salt Ayre Partnership Project and, are also working on Chatsworth Gardens, the Canal Corridor Project and assisting with commercialisation projects.

In supporting other services of the Council, Legal Services have undertaken a number of successful prosecutions including fly tipping, smoke infringements, food hygiene, and planning matters.

The day to day legal work incorporating debt collection, rating cases, recovery of rent arrears, council house sales and other property transactions, including sales and leases, has continued, as has the provision of a local land charges service, and the licensing and information management functions.

Human Resources

In the last 12 months the HR Team have continued to work closely with services across a range of activities, ensuring that all employment related matters are appropriately managed and are legally compliant. HR continues to be involved with a wide range of

change management activity to ensure that services and staff are aligned to support the Council's needs.

HR continue to work closely with managers and staff to maximise attendance and have been doing so since the introduction of a comprehensive approach to absence management in 2010. This approach has seen a successful reduction in absence rates from an average of 12.06 days per employee (or 4.64% of working time) as at 31 March 2010 to an average of 7.5 days per employee (or 2.88% of working time) as at 31 March 2016. This equates to an improvement in attendance of 38%. This achievement is set against reductions in staff, which in for most organisations normally result in higher levels of absence. This achievement of delivering sustained improvements in attendance, has a direct impact on Council performance and supports the delivery of services to the public in the context of financial cuts. Whilst figures are not yet available for the year ending 31 March 2017, the Council is on target to achieve a further improvement in attendance for the 7th consecutive year.

In January 2017 HR implemented a new e-learning tool; 'The Learning Zone'. This learning and development resource is available to all staff with IT access. It allows staff to undertake a range of essential learning and development activities at their desks and is more cost effective than attending classroom based activities. The number of courses available will be developed over time and this interactive tool will provide an important addition to Lancaster City Council's approach to ensuring our staff have the right skills and knowledge.

Autumn 2016 saw a further 4 apprentices (Housing, ICT, Environmental Health & HR) successfully complete their studies and be moved into permanent roles at the Council. HR are responsible for the apprenticeship programme and work closely with managers to identify apprenticeship opportunities. A further 8 individuals are due to complete their apprenticeships during 2017.

HR arranged the first employee recognition awards under the 'celebrating success' theme in October 2016. This first event was held to celebrate the successful completion of apprenticeships, and it is intended to extend this approach in 2017, thereby supporting the direct link between recognition and staff performance levels.