



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

**Executive
Annual Report
2004/05**

CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Foreword	3
Decision making arrangements	4
Portfolio Holder Annual Reports:	
Councillor Ian Barker	7
Councillor Jon Barry	17
Councillor Eileen Blamire	21
Councillor Abbott Bryning	24
Councillor Gina Dowding	28
Councillor Janice Hanson	38
Councillor Joyce Pritchard	41
Councillor Pat Quinton	46
Councillor Ron Sands	50
Councillor Alex Stone	55

Foreword from the Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet

I am pleased to present the Executive Annual Report for 2004/05. For the first time Cabinet Members reports are collected together in a separate booklet, which enables members of the public to access them easily if they wish. Although there have been annual reports in the past, these have not always been presented in this format. I welcome this as a further development in accountability and openness.

Executive Member accountability is a key part of the modernised Cabinet system. Lancaster City Council takes this very seriously and has a number of mechanisms by which the executive can be held to account. As well as the procedures involving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet members answer both written and oral questions in Council and, as Leader, I present a monthly report on behalf of the Cabinet and answer questions.

The reports show that in each of the portfolios, there has been progress in achieving the goals that the Coalition Cabinet set for itself. They show that the Council is modernising and becoming a more effective organisation. Rather than picking out highlights, I will let them speak for themselves. However, we all recognise that there is still much to do if we are to become the high performing and responsive council we aspire to become.

Councillor Ian Barker
Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet

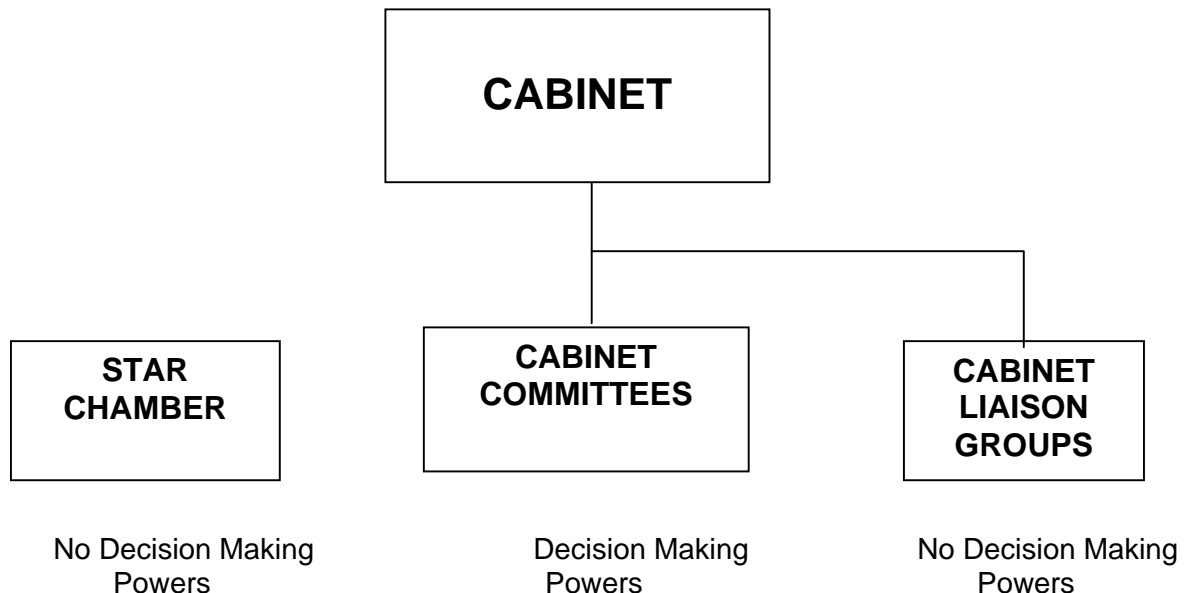
Decision making arrangements

The Cabinet is responsible for initiating and developing policy and taking policy decisions within the budget and policy framework set by the Council for all functions which are not specified as the responsibility of the Council, the Licensing Regulatory Committee, the Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee, the Personnel Committee, the Appeals Committee, the Audit Committee and the Standards Committee.

Up to 10 Executive Councillors each have an area of responsibility as set out below: -

Councillor	Portfolio
Ian Barker	Leader with overall Responsibility for the Budget.
Jon Barry	Waste Collection and Recycling and City Contract Services.
Eileen Blamire	Community Safety.
Abbott Bryning	Regeneration and Economic Development.
Gina Dowding	Local Agenda 21, Diversity Issues, Community Planning and Communication.
Janice Hanson	Transport and coastal protection.
Joyce Pritchard	Housing and Environmental Health.
Pat Quinton	All aspects of services to the rural areas.
Ron Sands	Tourism, Arts, Leisure and Museum.
Alex Stone	Internal Affairs including Benefits and e-Government.

The following structure has been adopted by the Cabinet for dealing with matters within its delegated powers: -



CABINET COMMITTEES

At present there are 3 Cabinet Committees who operate under delegated powers for decision making. These are: -

- Grants Committee;
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee;
- Performance Review Committee.

CABINET LIAISON GROUPS

The purpose of these Groups is purely consultative and not decision making. They are generally chaired by a member of Cabinet and there is no restriction on size although the group must be limited to what is manageable and effective for their purpose. They may be time limited or of longer standing, again depending on their purpose.

This provides an opportunity for Cabinet Members and non executive Members working closer together for the greater good of the community, along with people from outside of the Council.

STAR CHAMBER

The Star Chamber, which is an informal group of Members, is to assist Cabinet in bringing forward recommendations in respect of the Policy and Budget Framework. It is not a decision making body but will generate recommendations for decision takers. It meets every week and consists of a core membership of Cabinet Members and is supported by the Management Team and Head of Financial Services. It is not a formal body and is not subject to Access to Information rules.

AGENDA

From May 2004 138 Executive Decisions have been taken. Of these 79 were Key Decisions. 6 decisions were 'called-in' for further examination by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holder Area of responsibility Councillor	CABINET, CABINET COMMITTEES AND URGENT BUSINESS DECISION PROCEDURE			
	KEY DECISION (KD)	NKD TAKEN BY CABINET	INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION (ICMD)	URGENT BUSINESS DECISION (UBD)
Ian Barker	11	3	3	10
Jon Barry	6	-	2	-
Eileen Blamire	1	-	-	2
Abbott Bryning	15	7	12	1
Gina Dowding	-	1	1	-
Janice Hanson	10	-	5	2
Joyce Pritchard	15	-	2	4
Pat Quinton	12	-	4	-
Ron Sands	1	-	1	-
Alex Stone	8	1	18	5

KEY:-

Key Decisions	KD
Non Key Decisions	NKD
Decisions Called-In	DCI
Individual Cabinet Member Decision	ICMD
Urgent Business Decision	UBD

The above figures include decisions where a Member has been involved in the decision jointly with another Member or, in the case of urgent business, where the Member has been consulted by the Chief Executive.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR IAN BARKER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCE

1 INTRODUCTION



1.1 I am pleased to present my second report as Leader of the Council. The Council has made good progress during this year, building on the foundations that were laid in 2003/04 and is becoming a more effective and financially secure organisation. But what really counts is what we deliver for the people of Lancaster, Morecambe and the rural areas.

We can point to some significant achievements in improved services. I will pick out three:

- We now have one of the best performing benefits services in the country. We are now in the top quartile of all authorities – only recently we were in the bottom quartile.
- Our planning service is now meeting all the Government targets for handling planning applications – until recently we met none. We have been rewarded by receiving one of the largest allocations of Planning Delivery Grant in the country.
- A further phase of the three stream waste collection service was successfully rolled out and we are now hitting our local recycling targets and meeting national targets a year early.

None of these have been achieved easily. All of them have required investment, both of special government grants and of the normal revenue resources of the Council, and hard work from the Council's employees. We have had to set priorities and to recognise that there are some things we cannot do if we are to provide the improved services we want.

1.2 At the same time the Council has made significant progress in working with partners to achieve some ambitious regeneration projects. As we move into 2005/06 we can anticipate seeing some results on the ground on all these. These include:

- The redevelopment of the Midland Hotel by Urban Splash with the assistance on NWDA and THI funding;
- The major redevelopment of Luneside East using NWDA, English Partnerships and European money;
- The rebuilding of 4/5 Dalton Square as managed office space for developing high-tech companies - again with the assistance of the NWDA and European money.

- The implementation of the West End Masterplan using English Partnerships funding, and housing monies secured by the City Council and Adactus.

None of these projects have been without their difficulties and there is still much to be done if they are to be finally delivered, but the Council has seen them as strategic priorities and has focussed its efforts and staffing resources on them.

- 1.3 As I have said, there is still much to do. The Council has devoted considerable efforts to its Access to Services Review. The overriding purpose of this review is to deliver our services to our citizens and visitors in a way that suits their needs and is efficient and effective. So far we have yet to implement major changes. However this will start in 2005/06 as we implement our Customer Contact Centres in Lancaster and Morecambe. The aim is to provide a single telephone point of contact which will eventually handle the vast majority of service requests and enquiries, keep track of them, and ensure we deliver what we promise. However, there is much more to the Review than the Customer Contact Centres and its full implementation will mean big physical and cultural changes for the Council.
- 1.4 There is also a need to focus on further improvements in our services. One of the Cabinet's unfulfilled ambitions is to improve the standard of street cleansing. We need to focus on this in 2005/06. There is also the possibility that we may be able to move forward on the regeneration of the Canal Corridor site. It's important that we get the design and community benefits we aspire to as well as improved and expanded retail facilities.
- 1.5 We continue to face a difficult financial situation. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy requires us, subject to the level of Government Revenue Support Grants, to find £750,000 in 2005/06 and a similar sum in 2006/07 if we are to keep Council Tax rises to 5% or less and leave some modest room for growth. Nevertheless it is pleasing to report that in December 2004 we received one of the best Management Letters we have had from the Audit Commission. This clearly pointed to the improved financial position of the authority and the strengthened financial planning mechanisms including the Star Chamber and the MTFs. It is absolutely clear that good financial planning and management is essential if we are to continue to deliver improvements.
- 1.6 Last year, the CPA review said that the Council was only at the beginning of a journey of improvement. In the last year I believe we have advanced some way along the road. However, the end of that journey is not yet in sight and we have much more to do if we are to provide the excellent service and representation for the people of the district that I believe the Council should aspire to.
- 1.7 Over the last year two years, I have received tremendous help from officers of the Council at every level of the organisation. It is a cliché – but nonetheless true – to say that local government is a people business. We have some very good people and I do want to thank them for their efforts over the past year.

2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP

- Access to Services Review Board.
- Cabinet.
- Grants Committee.
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group.
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee.
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Performance Review Committee.

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc

- Governing Body – Lancaster and Morecambe College Corporation.
- GONW Objective 2 & 3 Programme Management/Regional Committee^[1].
- GONW Programme Management Group^[2].
- Lancashire Leaders Meeting.
- Lancaster Local Strategic Partnership.
- LSP Health and Wellbeing Group.
- North West Regional Assembly.

^[1] European Regional Development Programme

^[2] European Regional Development Programme – shared with Councillor Val Stevens, Manchester City Council.

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 CABINET

4.1.1 During the last year the responsibilities of Cabinet members have been essentially unchanged.

Councillor	Portfolio
Barker	Leader and Finance
Stone	Internal Affairs and e-Government
Dowding	Community Planning, Diversity, LA21
Bryning	Regeneration and Economic Development
Sands	Tourism, Leisure, Arts and Museums
Pritchard	Environmental Health and Housing
Hanson	Transport and Coast Protection
Barry	Waste Management, Recycling, CCS
Blamire	Community Safety
Quinton	Rural Affairs

4.1.2 The Cabinet has worked well together across party lines and continues to achieve a remarkable degree of consensus on most issues.

4.1.3 During the year the Cabinet reviewed the Coalition priorities in the light of our own assessment what had been achieved so far and published a revised set of priorities. This is a useful exercise in open government that has not been previously attempted. It enables the Cabinet to maintain its focus on the

issues it believes are important. The Coalition priorities were then used as part of the basis of the Corporate Plan for 2005/06. I intend to repeat this exercise in the autumn.

- 4.1.4 Recently, we reviewed the cross-cutting Rural Affairs portfolio. The feedback from officers was that the portfolio had helped with “rural proofing” of policies.
- 4.1.5 There have been a number of changes in the way in which Cabinet works. Individual Cabinet member decisions are now taken on a fortnightly basis and this has helped the efficient conduct of business. The Cabinet has set up a number of Cabinet Liaison Groups, which involve other Members and outside bodies, and these are used to help inform Cabinet decisions. I hope that shortly a new Group will be formed to liaise with small businesses in Morecambe.
- 4.1.6 Perhaps most importantly, a Cabinet Performance Review Committee has been set up. The arrangements we inherited, in which performance management was entirely the responsibility of the Review Boards, were clearly unsatisfactory. It meant that Cabinet took no formal responsibility for monitoring the implementation of decisions that it took or for the performance of the services for which its members were responsible. However, it is also clear that performance review should be part of the responsibilities of the overview and scrutiny side of the Council too. Striking the right balance between the responsibilities of the Budget and Performance Panel and the Cabinet is difficult. My impression is that other Councils have similar difficulties. However, I believe the Cabinet Performance Review Committee is a step in the right direction.
- 4.1.7 The Cabinet Performance Review Committee has established a number of high level indicators that it reviews; it examines the regular Corporate Financial Monitoring report; and it reviews the progress of the Local Public Service Agreement that we have signed with the County Council. Individual Cabinet members review the Business Plans and the performance of the services for which they are responsible on an informal basis.
- 4.1.8 I would like to thank all my Cabinet colleagues for their contributions and for the collegial spirit with which they have worked.

4.2 **FINANCE**

As in 2003/04, the financial situation of the Council constrains what we can achieve for local people. Ultimately, unless the Council can manage its finances in a sustainable way, it cannot hope to deliver sustainable improvements in services for local people. However much progress has been made this year in improving the financial position of the authority and in strengthening financial management.

4.2.2 **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Last year we adopted a formal Medium Term Financial Strategy for the first time. That committed us to holding our portion of any Council Tax increases to 5% or less and identified a savings and income target of around £500,000 a year if we were to achieve this. The recent budget delivered on that target with Lancaster’s tax rise being 4.8%.

During the year, the MTFs were kept under review. The main change resulted from the Comprehensive Spending Review, which appeared to direct most of the Government's above inflation increases in Revenue Support Grant into top tier and unitary authorities. As a result, we revised our savings target upwards. This was offset however by the additional RSG that the Chancellor announced in his pre-Budget Report.

The MTFs have proved to be an extremely useful tool in managing the Council's revenue budget. Effectively, we not only project our budgets three years into the future, but we set ourselves targets for managing them. For the next two years we have retained the 5% Council Tax target. The key element in estimating the consequential savings target is the RSG increase. We have made a cautious estimate that this will grow by 2% in 2005/06 and 2006/07 although this is subject to uncertainty. Clearly the Government's stated intention to move towards three-year settlements for RSG is very welcome in this context.

4.2.3 Star Chamber

To generate the savings necessary in 2004/05, Star Chamber continued to meet on a weekly basis. Again this has proved to be a very useful mechanism for informally examining the Council's revenue budget and generating proposals for the Cabinet to move forward to Council to consider.

Increasingly, Star Chamber has focussed on identifying savings through efficiencies that do not affect the level of service. An example of this is the closure of the cash offices. We still offer people the opportunity to pay bills in cash by use of the Post Office network and smart cards so there is no loss of service. However, we have generated in the region of £100k of savings. Increasingly, as we encourage modern forms of payments we can cut transactional costs.

For 2005/06, Star Chamber will operate in a slightly different manner. Instead of looking at services on an individual basis, we will examine directorates. The focus will very much be on finding efficiency savings (especially cashable ones) in line with the Gershon agenda.

4.2.4 Renewals

Writers of letters to local newspapers often remark that Council Tax increases much more rapidly than inflation and ask why. Even though last year's 4.8% was the lowest for six years and well below the average 10.33% of the 2000 to 2003 budgets, it is a pertinent question which deserves an answer. There are many reasons, but one of the most important is that the Council has not made adequate provision for renewals. Buildings, particularly older buildings like the two Town Halls, need major repairs; vehicles wear out; IT systems need upgrading on a regular basis; and money needs to be invested to provide the pensions of our retired employees. To say that is to state the obvious - but our revenue budgets have not properly anticipated these expenditures. Our reach, in terms of what we want to do, has often been beyond our grasp, in terms of what we are prepared to ask the public to pay for. The result is that some of the basics have not been properly funded over the years.

The 2005 budget tackled two of these four problems. We took a big hit on pensions. We needed to increase the employer's contributions from 13.2% to 16.1%. Although we had the option to postpone some of this expenditure, we chose not to do so – that would only build up problems for the future. We have properly provided for the renewal of our vehicle fleet, much of which was being operated beyond the end of its useful economic life, and this will be part of our base budget in future.

However financing IT costs and capital works to our buildings still place a huge burden on our capital programme. Clearly we will have to start to tackle these ongoing costs. However, it is not possible to do all this in one year.

4.2.5 Capital

On the capital side, the 2005 budget presented more problems than we had anticipated. From a situation where we had a balanced five-year programme, achieved after a thorough review of commitments in 2004, new bids meant that the programme was £6 million in excess of available resources. This was largely due to the renewals problem mentioned above and some difficult decisions had to be made, at a late stage in the budget process, in balancing priorities between different areas of the Council's activities. In 2005/06 Star Chamber will receive regular reports from the officer Asset Management Group in order to be able to review the capital programme throughout the year and to formulate capital budget proposals at an earlier stage.

Despite the above, the Council has a large and ambitious capital programme, much of it as a result of successful bids for external funding. Managing this is a major challenge. One innovation in this year's programme is the use of the Council's prudential borrowing powers provide "leeway". This will enable us to cope with changes of up to £0.5 million in the available resources. The revenue consequences are built into the budget.

There is also planned use of prudential borrowing in Years 4 and 5 of the capital programme. However, I would hope that we should be able to generate sufficient additional capital receipts before then to eliminate this.

5 CORPORATE ISSUES

5.1 Access to Services Review

5.1.1 As mentioned above, the Access to Services Review has been underway for all of the last year. The Audit Commission will shortly be inspecting us on this work. During the year the work was divided into three strands and I propose to deal with these in turn.

5.1.2. First there is the development of the Customer Service Centres. This is a major piece of cross cutting work for the Council. We know that the vast majority of people who wish to contact the Council want to do so by telephone, so the provision of a single number and a centre that can deal efficiently and effectively with calls is very important. At the same time we are committed to having face to face contact centre in both Morecambe and Lancaster and to making more and more services available electronically.

5.1.3 However, this about much more than handling calls efficiently and giving accurate information. It is about tracking our response to them and making

sure that we deliver the services we promise on time and to the required standard. It is about understanding the needs of our citizens and customers, capturing information and using it to improve services. It is also about understanding our own services and asking ourselves whether we can deliver them differently.

- 5.1.4 This leads on to the second strand of the Review. That is about establishing clear standards of service that we can communicate to people. There is some good practice in some services, but this needs to be done across the Council. It is also about handling complaints and learning from them.
- 5.1.5 The third strand is about our buildings and their accessibility. We are blessed or cursed, depending on your point of view, with two attractive listed town halls that are part of the heritage of the district, but which are inefficient buildings, which are costly to maintain and run and difficult to access. We also run services from eight other buildings. Major investment is required to improve the buildings we retain and to make them accessible and this will be financed by disposals of others. Options on how to do this are still being developed.
- 5.1.6 The Access to Services Review will require major cultural change for the authority. Partly this will be about internal reorganisation – setting up Customer Services, moving front office staff to it, and reconfiguring the back office. More importantly it will be about establishing the Council as an open and outward looking organisation.

5.2 **Cockling**

One year on from the tragedy, it is important to record the progress that has been made and obstacles that remain. Regular meetings have continued to be held with all the agencies. It is clear to me that there is an enhanced level of co-operation and communication and that inter-agency working has improved greatly. However, the legislative framework has not. The Council's view is that a licensing scheme that takes into account the competence and health and safety of people fishing for shell fish as well as the sustainability of the fishery needs to be introduced. I have continued to lobby Ministers to this effect.

6 **PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.1 The main focus of the Finance Portfolio will be the targets that have been established in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Gershon efficiencies; the principal mechanism will be the Star Chamber review. Much of this has been dealt with above, however it is worth drawing attention to some points that will require greater emphasis.
- 6.2 There will be an increased emphasis on procurement and how we can make savings. The Council will also be discussing with the Chamber and others how “doing business with the council” can help local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).
- 6.3 I hope also to be able to consult more widely on the MTFS at the time of the mid year review.

- 6.4 The organisational changes that come from the Access to Services Review must also be used to improve value for money and generate savings. The same considerations apply to our e-government programme and the changes to Council accommodation. Efficiency savings can either lead to improved quality of service or lower costs. Usually these are alternatives – we are rarely in the situation where we can achieve both. The easy route on a decision by decision basis for a local authority is to choose quality, but we must meet our MTFS targets. That means that we must try to ensure that choices between qualitative improvements and cost savings are explicit and that we make a choice determined by the Council's priorities.
- 6.5 We need to explore joint working with other councils and other public sector bodies in an effort to share costs and generate efficiencies. We have tendered for provision of internal audit services for South Lakeland District Council. At the time of writing the outcome is unknown. However, this sort of sharing of services is something I would like to encourage.
- 6.6 The other aspect of my responsibilities that needs further development is performance management. The Cabinet PMC is now established, but often, as the Audit Commission guidance recognises, informal arrangements work best in achieving changes. We need to embed the arrangements described above in the way Cabinet works.

7 CORPORATE PLAN ISSUES

This year the City Council has identified 21 key High Level Actions which will help to deliver its priorities.

The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 4 Consulting, listening and communicating with the public and our partners to ensure that the services we provide are driven by their needs and priorities.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 5 Managing our organisation, guided by the principles of openness, integrity and accountability in our role as community leaders and ensure our services offer quality and value for money.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 11 Increasing the number of people participating in the Council's Leisure programmes and increasing the number and range of facilities available.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 15 Conserving non-renewable resources.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 19 Improving the links between sustainable development and economic vitality.

The 2005/06 Corporate Plan identifies the following Priority Outcomes that will be my responsibility:

- To adopt a new economic vision for the district. (jointly with Councillor Bryning).

This refers to work done on the Vision Board. After a slow start this is now beginning to get down to work on an economic Vision for the district.

- To meet the financial targets set within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and provide local people with cost effective services.
- To increase overall levels of public satisfaction with the Council.

The Access to Services Review is crucial to achieving this.

- To improve the Council.

This refers to the Improvement Plan arising from the CPA and other inspections. The Cabinet Performance Review Committee is the principal mechanism for reviewing progress.

- To ensure that our staff feel that their contributions are valued (jointly with Councillors Dowding and Stone).

I hope that as the actions in the improvement plan are carried out staff satisfaction will rise and this is being monitored. However, we also need to ensure that actions such as the job evaluation are carried out fairly and well.

9 **CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 Quite deliberately, I will repeat almost exactly what I said in conclusion last year.
- 9.2 This has been a challenging year and the coming year will be no different. The Council is in a much healthier position at the end of the year than it was at the start but we still have a long way to go if we are to make this an excellent Council.
- 9.3 The public does not judge us on the quality of our plans or the robustness of our finances – those are only a means to an end. Instead they are interested in how well we represent them and how we improve the quality of life in the district. They focus specifically on the quality of our services and the amount of Council Tax they pay.
- 9.4 There is a lot to do improve the Council further and to change plans into action and I look forward to the opportunity to be involved in doing that. Our focus must be on what we deliver to the people of Lancaster, Morecambe, Heysham, Carnforth and the rural areas and not on our internal processes.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JON BARRY, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR WASTE COLLECTION, RECYCLING AND CITY CONTRACT SERVICES



I want to report on the following aspects of my responsibilities:

Recycling
Trees
Street Cleansing
Toilets
Open Spaces

There has, of course, been loads more done; but these are the things I have been personally involved with.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee.
- Performance Review Committee.
- Recycling Cabinet Liaison Group.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Waste Management Strategy Steering Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2004/5

Recycling

A further 10,000 homes were moved onto the three stream system. By the end of the next financial year we will have around half of the district's homes on the new system. In April 2004 we achieved the Government's recycling target of 12%. We are hoping to be around 15-16% by April 2005 – which is close to the target of 18% needed by April 2006. Changing to the new system requires a considerable amount of effort from staff and householders and I am grateful that the transition went as well as it did.

Trees

We have undergone a fairly major review of street and other trees during the last year. Our recent street survey has shown that we have lost something like 600 street trees in the last 10 years although I suspect that a lot more have been planted in our open spaces. Last month we passed a new tree strategy which, amongst other things, has established a process that will allow the Council to replant street trees. It also formalises consultation procedures for felling and planting of trees. There has been a small additional amount of funding to improve tree maintenance and I hope that we can add to this through work undertaken in the coming year (see open spaces below).

Street Cleansing

We have continued work on our litter strategy. In the Autumn I had the pleasure (along with the Mayor) of presenting prizes for new anti-litter and anti-dog poo sign designs by ten of our district's children. This project was funded by the Community Safety Partnership. Hopefully, by the time this report comes to press the new signs will have started going up. The new litter and dumping enforcement powers inferred on the PCSO in Castle Ward have been a success and we need to roll these out to the other PCSOs in the district. There is a new "main person" in the local police and we need to meet him and argue the case. Two new strands to the litter strategy have been proposed – greater use of enforcement powers using the new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act and reviewing the current mix of how we actually clean the streets. Hopefully, we can get these moving in the coming year. Financially, I am pleased that we have been able to raise £25,000 in the forthcoming budget to improve street cleansing in Lancaster City Centre. Of course, I would have liked more and I continue to argue the case that we should be spending money on making our district look good rather than telling people that it is. Staff have undertaken a review of street cleansing schedules and they have changed frequencies to focus on problem areas as well as high profile areas such as major routes. We are also looking at how we can clean urban streets where parked cars cause big problems.

Toilets

I had the unenviable task of pulling the chain on four of the district's toilets this year (along with my Cabinet colleagues). I am less concerned about the toilets at St Leonardgate and Bare as there are toilets nearby. However, I am hoping that the work being undertaken by Poulton Neighbourhood Management will lead to new or refurbished toilets around the Clock Tower and the Arndale Centre – possibly in partnership with the new owners of the Centre. My hope also is that the Council will be able to do a deal with The George at Torrisholme to instigate a PPP – though we have not succeeded so far.

Open Spaces

As part of the budget cuts last year we decided not to cut the grass in some of our open spaces. Whilst I broadly agree with this approach, we could certainly do it better. In particular, Cabinet has asked the Operations Manager (Grounds Maintenance) to work with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (and me, I hope) to come up with ways that we can improve the management of such areas to promote flora and fauna. Hopefully, we will be able to come up with a system that gives people pleasure, encourages nature and saves money. Perhaps it is a reflection of my advancing years, but recreating wildflower meadows is something that gets me rather excited.

Other Areas of Development

These include:

- the transfer of Building Maintenance Services from CCS to integrate with Council Housing
- development of Trade Wastes Commercial business to keep it viable
- review of Fleet procurement and management to be more efficient/cost effective and the creation of a Fleet Manager post

Scrutiny

I have been called in to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a couple of times to talk about toilets and dumping of rubbish.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

Future Developments for 2005/06

In the Corporate Plan for 2005/06, Priority 3 includes *“reducing the amount of waste produced in the District, making our local environment cleaner and healthier”*. Two specific outcomes are:

- To improve the cleanliness of our streets
- To reduce waste in the District by recycling and re-using

In October 2005 and March 2006 we will be investing in extension of the recycling and wheeled bin collection system to include another 10,000 houses. Design work is also being carried out on the 2006/07 recycling options. And we will continue to work towards our target of 90% of the District using wheeled bins by 2008.

The other big area of development is to tackle the litter in the area which residents tell us is of major concern. A comprehensive Litter Strategy has been developed and supporting action to deliver it will be one of my personal priorities.

Other development areas are:

- to evaluate and support the new approach to fleet management
- to action the revised approach to public toilet provision
- to support delivery of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and the changes this will need in how we operate grounds maintenance
- development of the Customer Services Contact Centre for CCS work

CORPORATE PLAN ISSUES:

This year the City Council has identified 21 key High Level Actions which will help to deliver its priorities.

The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 13 *Improving the cleanliness of our streets, alleyways and local environment*

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 14 *Reducing the total amount of waste produced in the District by recycling and reusing where possible*

CONCLUSION:

Once again, 2004/05 has been a particularly hectic year for City Contract Services with many successes. But as with any changes, they take some time to bed in and for people to get used to new ways of doing things. And 2005/06 promises even more changes in the challenging areas of work of my Portfolio.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY



This has been a good year for the partnership with all its members working together effectively to make our area a safer and pleasanter place to live in, to work in and to visit.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Community Legal Services Partnership
- Community Safety Strategy Group.
- Community Safety Strategy Group, Executive Member.
- Community Safety Strategy Group, Lancaster Action Group
- Lancashire Police Authority Partnerships Forum.

PARTNERSHIPS:

Community Safety Partnership

The Council continues to act as the accountable body for Building Safer Communities (BSC) funding as well as Second Homes from the Police and Fire authorities, and funding from other agencies totalling approximately £270k. The Council continues to hold a specific budget of £10,000 per annum for Community Safety but also makes a direct financial contribution through funding the Community Safety Officer and CCTV as well as contributing through a range of service based initiatives

A new three year Strategy (2005 to 2008) has been launched. This Strategy has been based on an in-depth audit and consultation of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour levels across the district. The Strategy has also taken into account Government priorities.

The Council' has a statutory responsibility to endorse the Community Safety Strategy, along with associated spending plan for 2005 to 2008 and it has been my responsibility to make recommendations to Council to adopt the strategy.

Staff time continues with work around mainstreaming community safety into Council services by starting to audit community safety work in Council services and action plan further work which can be undertaken.

When external funding ceased for the Neighbourhood Wardens in Poulton and West End it was necessary to find an alternative way forward for the scheme and it has been possible to do this by bringing together CSP funds with Poulton Neighbourhood Management and European funding through the West End Partnership. The Wardens continue to operate in these areas albeit as a smaller scheme, and it has been possible to expand the geographic area covered to become a mobile service which will target key problem areas across the district, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Emergency Community Support Officers (ECSOs) are in place over the district, at least in part funded by the partnership. These schemes combined mean that we have been able to provide a uniformed presence in key areas across the district which contributes to people feeling safer as well as reducing crime.

The Council, with CSP funds, has employed an Antisocial Behaviour Para Legal Officer whose role is to support Council and partner initiatives around antisocial behaviour including taking enforcement action.

The CSP is developing a One Stop Shop for those experiencing domestic violence, based in St Leonards' House, Lancaster. This will enable those experiencing domestic violence to access a number of services more quickly than they could otherwise. The Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers and support workers from Lancaster District Womens' Aid will be based in the One Stop Shop, whilst other services will ensure they are easily accessible.

The Council has developed a Licensing protocol and key areas have been designated as 'no drinking on the street' areas.

A Teen Meet is being developed in the Highfield area of Lancaster lead by the Council's Leisure Services Dept.

A further CCTV camera is being set in North Road, Lancaster city centre to supplement the new camera overlooking the Millenium Bridge. and the current network of CCTV is being maintained. New lighting has been trialled on a section of the bridge and found to be successful. Within the next two months the lighting will have been added to the whole of the bridge.

The City Council magazine has been used to promote the Community Safety Partnership, and it's Communications Team has assisted in CSP promotions around the audit and strategy.

A Lancaster City Council vehicle has been used in the Nightowl project where the Police and PCSOs patrolled the routes leading away from the city centre at peak times to reduce alcohol related crime and disorder.

Lancaster City Council continued to fund Lancaster District Womens' Aid (LDWA).

It has been a busy year with meetings of the Lancaster Action Group, the Morecambe Action Group, Rural Action Group, Substance Misuse Working Group, Domestic Violence Forum and Young People Joint Action Group, all feeding experience and information into the larger Strategy Group.

CORPORATE PLAN ISSUES:

This year the City Council has identified 21 key High Level Actions which will help to deliver its priorities.

The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Action has been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 1. To reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour within our communities.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR ABBOTT BRYNING, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Economic regeneration is crucial to the continued economic and social development in our District and that we maintain good relationships with all relevant stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Lancaster and District Chamber Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee.
- Lancaster City Centre Management Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Groundwork Trust, Lancashire West.
- Lancashire West Partnership.
- Lancaster Regeneration Partnership.
- LSP Regeneration Building Block.
- Morecambe Bay Partnership.
- North and West Lancashire Priority 1 Action Plan Partnership Board.
- Winning Back the West End Steering Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Achievements in 2004/05

- The EDZ after considerable planning and development work is now being implemented. Final plans for 4/5 Dalton Square have been approved, match funding is in place and the project will start on site in May with completion in 12 months time. The new workspace will be a boost to local provision for new and growing companies.
- The Council has agreed an investment to save proposal to bring forward the Port of Heysham industrial site. The investment in new access arrangements will ensure that the latest demand for industrial space can be made in an area that will complement the renewal programme in the West End of Morecambe.
- Luneside East is currently going through the land assembly process utilising CPO powers where necessary. A successful developer competition has been run and a preferred developer appointed with formal legal agreement due to be completed.
- Lancaster Business Park has seen a second phase of office development which has already been let.
- In Morecambe significant progress has been made in partnership with Urban Splash who have now got full agreement to a funding package that will see the Midland Hotel restored to its former glory. The partnership between the Council and Urban Splash on the adjacent central promenade site is progressing well and will provide significant new investment over the forthcoming years.
- The adoption of the West End Masterplan as supplementary planning guidance represents a significant step forward for the West End of Morecambe representing a high level of partnership commitment which will over the next five years deliver significant change for the better.
- The initial investment of £2m in advance of the Masterplan by English Partnerships represents a significant commitment to renewal of the West End.
- The establishment of the Vision Board as a joint venture with the NWDA will allow the district to take a longer term view about economic regeneration with a range of partners and position Lancaster as a significant regional priority.
- Partnership with the University has seen significant development as the region has recognised the quality of research and delivery at the University. The NWDA investment in Infolab 21, the management school and leadership training has positioned Lancaster as one of the centres of expertise and innovation in this region.
- In Planning the authority's performance in meeting targets set by the Government has been recognised with an award in excess of £500,000 of Planning Delivery Grant. The grant will be used to invest in sustaining and improving performance.

- The local plan's successor, the Local Development Framework, is well underway and is being underpinned by policy development on major regeneration schemes such as the West End Masterplan.
- Significant developments have taken place to upgrade technology and make the planning and building control system easier to access for the public. Applications can now be tracked on-line and consultation carried out electronically.

Portfolio Development

2005/06 will be a critical year for the delivery of some high profile projects:

- The Central Promenade site in Morecambe will be the subject of an RIBA Masterplanning competition in the early summer which will form the basis of a public consultation. The delivery of the Central Promenade site will be crucial to the future of Morecambe.
- Similarly the delivery of phase 1 of the West End Masterplan will be a key target to complement work being carried out in the centre of the town.
- Luneside East should in the next 12 months see all land assembly being completed and a start being made on clean up and development.
- The Council's partnership with the Vision Board will be critical in setting the economic regeneration agenda for the next decade and is attracting future funding.
- Developing the masterplan approach to the Canal Corridor with preferred partners Centros Miller will be a significant project for the district.
- Responding to the County Council planning application for the M6 Link road will be a critical piece of work, as will the partnership with the County Council to develop a range of complementary traffic alleviation measures to improve transport through and around the district.

CORPORATE PLAN ISSUES:

This year the City Council has identified 21 key High Level Actions which will help to deliver its priorities.

The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 17 Ensuring that the whole district, City, Coast and Countryside has a vibrant, varied and viable local economy and targeting deprivation and unemployment in parts of our district.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 18 Attracting the maximum number of visitors to our district and to provide a high quality environment for them to enjoy.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 20 Using the planning system to enhance and preserve the quality of life for those who live and work in the City, Coast or Countryside and to preserve and promote the heritage of our private and public buildings.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 21 Regenerating brownfield land in order to provide local jobs and create business opportunities and encourage inward investment.

CONCLUSION:

2004/05 has been a busy and challenging year, but with some significant achievements. Lancaster and Morecambe are now poised to see some major schemes delivered in the next 12 months and to capitalise on the significant investor and developer interest that has been generated. It will be crucial to the district and residents' future prosperity that the opportunities that are available are capitalised upon successfully.

With the increasing emphasis in the North West on the Northern Way and Central Lancs City Region, it is imperative, in view of our peripherality, that this does not overshadow our District's economic and social improvement. Consequently, every effort is needed to maintain our influence elsewhere where key decisions are made.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR GINA DOWDING, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOCAL AGENDA 21, DIVERSITY ISSUES AND LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP



Much of the work I am reporting on is a result of the work of partnerships with other agencies. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment given by individuals in other organisations to this work and also to the terrific support and expertise provided by our own staff in the Corporate Strategy service Gina Dowding.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Grants Committee.
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee.
- Diversity Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Lancaster City Centre Management Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES Etc:

- Lancaster Local Strategic Partnership.
- Local Agenda 21 Partnership Steering Group.
- LSP Children and Young People Building Block.
- MAPfED.
- Morecambe Bay Tobacco Control Alliance.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Much of the work I am reporting on is a result of the work of partnerships with other agencies. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment given by individuals in other organisations to this work and also to the terrific support and expertise provided by our own staff in the Corporate Strategy service.

My special areas of responsibility on the Cabinet cover consultation, community planning, sustainability, diversity and young people's issues. The following is a summary of key events and outputs in the last year in these areas.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

1. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Lancaster City Council aims to ensure that all residents and other interested parties are given the opportunity to have an input on issues that affect them and / or that are of interest to them. The council recognises that not every customer wants the same thing and our ability to meet our customers needs and expectations may be constrained by practical, operational and / or funding issues.

Consultation Strategy and Toolkit

The Council's Corporate Strategy section is currently leading a review of the Council's Consultation Strategy and Toolkit and is developing a consultation calendar and website to enable all consultations to be co-ordinated, thus avoiding duplication, ensuring the best use of resources and minimising 'consultation fatigue'.

The Council wants to ensure that all its consultation activity is accessible to all communities and stakeholders in the district, particularly hard to reach groups. Therefore it is specifically reviewing:

- how we let people know when we are consulting
- the methods we use to consult
- how people can take part
- how we feedback the findings to those who participated and the wider community.

Consultation Website

The new consultation website will enable information to be posted about proposed consultations along with details of current and past consultations. In some instances survey forms may be available either to be downloaded or to be completed on-line. Once the review is completed, there will be an announcement in the press to advise residents.

Council Website

SOCITIM (website industry monitoring body) awarded THE City Council's website the maximum score for its news and it also scored highly for the currency of it's information.

Council Magazine

Issue 7 now is due out in May. Council funding for the magazine covers about two thirds of the actual cost of producing two magazines a year, the rest coming from services with specific marketing budgets.

Welcome to the District Publication

The City Council has got the support of a range of other public sector organisations and is producing a Welcome to the District brochure, at no cost, which will be provided to new residents, new employers, potential new visitors/employers etc. This is due out in June/July.

Advertising

A lot of work has been done to encourage a more corporate approach to advertising. We have acquired a corporate discount from Lancaster & Morecambe Newspapers and have produced a toolkit, which has been made available to all staff to support them in advertising work.

Print, Design and Distribution

Following the results of a council-wide survey, a sub group of the Communications Working Group is working to establish a toolkit to support staff producing print and design work, It may also include photography. The aim is to ensure that there is consistency of quality and image across all areas of the Council.

As part of that work it is also anticipated that the number of designers and printers the council uses will reduce to provide the council with a stronger bargaining position and better-value-for-money, whilst, at the same time, not compromising quality. We are also working with the university's design and print team and have agreed, where appropriate, to call on each other when extra capacity is required.

Access to services

Internal communications support has been provided to keep staff and members informed regarding the developments in Access to Services. There has also been some external communication, and a Communications Strategy for the new Customer Service Centre has been developed. Communications has also been ensuring the press releases and home page news messages are kept up-to-date, and contributes to the revamping of the website.

Media Training

Over the past year approximately 25 officers and members have received media training. Feedback has been extremely positive.

Funded Work

The Communications Team is now required to bring in funding to match the communications officer's salary – with add-ons this will be £23,500 this financial year, allowing us to continue our partnership work for a range of services with the funding to pay for it.

2. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

The Lancaster District LSP is the body which brings together all the public services in the area (including the City and County Council) and representatives of the business, voluntary and community sectors. It came together for the first time in 2001 and has continued to develop and grow ever since. The current structure of the LSP comprises of an Executive Group made up of 15 members and supported by officers of the City Council. They meet every two months to receive information on key issues affecting the district and most importantly, consider ways of responding to these and other issues by working together in partnership through the framework of the Community Strategy.

Members of the partnership work together within a series of themed partnerships known as 'Building Blocks'. This is to ensure that their own individual strategies, plans and budgets are all pointing in the same direction, so as the vision set out in the Community Strategy can be achieved through real and practical partnership working.

Examples of presentations to and responses by the LSP Executive Group have included:

- "Towards a Smoke Free Morecambe Bay" by Jacqui Thompson, MBPCT. Following the presentation members of the LSP agreed to distribute information and advice throughout their organisations promoting the stop smoking services offered by MBPCT.

- “Housing Young People” by Phil McGrath, YMCA & Steve Matthews, Lancaster City Council. The issue of housing and young people was brought to the attention of the LSP Executive via the Children and Young People’s Building Block where it was identified as a joint priority and a gap in the Community Strategy. The LSP Executive presently await bids from the Lancaster City Council Strategic Housing / YMCA and Lancaster City Council Strategic Housing / County Palatine Housing Association to address the issues raised
- “LPSA II and S&SCF” by Andy Mullaney, Judith Moore & Colleen Martin Lancashire County Council. Following the presentations the LSP were involved in a joint consultation process with the City Council and the CSP to identify Lancaster’s joint priorities for LPSA II.
- “Opportunities for Older People” by Janet Beadle, Lancashire County Council. After the Older People’s presentation the LSP Executive agreed to the formation of a new forum which would be accepted as a sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Building Block.

The next two presentations planned are concerning the lessons learnt from the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Pilot project by John Deacon Neighbourhood Manager and the issues of increasing debt in the district by Austin Staunton Morecambe and Heysham Citizens Advice Bureau.

LSP Second Home Funding for projects

Last year new Government rules meant district councils, such as Lancaster City Council, could chose to increase council tax on second homes in their area from 50 per cent to 90 per cent. In the Lancaster District, the Council Tax was increased to 90% on second homes, in line with this ruling. This generated a substantial amount of extra income to the County Council, City Council, Police Authority and Fire Authority.

During financial year 2004/05, both Lancashire County Council and Lancaster City Council allocated the £242,000 of extra income they received to the LSP. The Police and Fire service allocated their additional income to the Community Safety Partnership.

The LSP’s second home funds were used to support issues that emerged during the consultation on the Draft Community Strategy as local people’s top priorities. These included transport and the difficulties experienced in travelling around our District.

In total 22 projects / activities were supported by the LSP in 2004/05, including the following which show the range of partnership work and community / voluntary sector engagement in the district.

- SAL’s (Safe at Last) Place – One Stop Shop for Domestic Violence
- School’s travel plan officer
- Morecambe One Stop Shop for Young People
- Additional management at Lancaster Bus Station
- Pedal Power - cycle recycling and training project
- Halton Recreation Area Improvements

LSP Conference

The LSP is committed to hosting two conferences a year to bring together the large number of organisations from all sectors some of whom do not formally and regularly take part in the work of the Building Blocks. The first LSP conference was held on 7 December 2004 at Central Lancaster High School and was attended by 80 Members from a broad range of organisations. The purpose of the event was twofold:

- To consider how the LSP can work together to 'add value' to existing work and to improve partnership working to reach the most disadvantaged in the district.
- To hear more about the proposed Full Service Extended School at Central High School

During the conference workshops the idea of an LSP directory was suggested, which it is now hoped to create on the Lancashire Community Portal, scheduled to be launched in September 2005.

The second LSP Conference is presently being planned for 29th June 2005 and will focus on the successes and achievements of the Building Blocks to date in terms of delivering the Community Strategy.

LSP Executive Sustainability Training Event

The LSP Executive and key Heads of Service from the City Council attended a "Sustainable Cities" training event on 14 April where people worked outside their normal professional disciplines. The event made delegates consider how decisions they take in their organisation can impact upon other organisations both now and in the longer-term. It also helped to make delegates realise that different organisations often have funding for the same themes and therefore they need to work in partnership to maximise the benefits of their resources and reduce duplication of effort.

3. DIVERSITY

Diversity Festival

The first Diversity Festival for the Lancaster District was held in October 2004, pulled together by the Diversity Festival Steering Group (a sub group of MAPfED - the LSP's equality and diversity Building Block). Members included Lancaster City Council; Lancashire Constabulary; Lancashire County Council Youth and Community Services & Traveller Education Service; Probation Service; MBPCT; Lancaster University Students Union & Jewish Society, Global Link, and many volunteers.

The aims of the Diversity Festival were to:

- Recognise and celebrate diversity
- Raise awareness and educate
- Challenge oppression
- Support long-term partnerships and programmes
- Bring groups and individuals together
- Link local and global

Events included: Diversity Radio- a community radio project which provided information to residents about local events, news and views on local issues and provided volunteers with training and experience in the field of radio broadcast; films about sexuality and Black history; theatre, music and dance; exhibitions, workshops and talks and 'Diverse' the Lancaster District Diversity Festival newspaper funded by Lancaster University, and edited by members of the Students Union.

MAPfED (Equality and Diversity Building Block)

The Council is has recently taken the lead in reviewing the partnership arrangements for promoting diversity within the district in pursuit of the aims of the Community Strategy. Since 2001, MAPfED has been concerned with achieving diversity goals within the district but lead agencies and partners considered the time right for a review. A new building block partnership (of the LSP) is currently being formed to

work strategically to improve equality of opportunity and reduce discrimination within the district.

The Council intends to use its membership of this building block to achieve real improvements in the consultation arrangements within the district so that tangible evidence of engagement with a number of 'hard to reach group' can be shown. This is intended to make a real difference by providing opportunities for such groups to influence the shaping and delivery of a range of local services.

Diversity through the City Council

Having already achieved level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in 2004, the Council is committed, in its Corporate Plan to achieving level 2 of the standard by March 2007. The Council's Corporate Equalities Planning Group, comprising senior officers from a range of Services, is tasked with making the necessary progress.

Significant improvements have been made to equality training for both members and officers – increasing awareness of diversity now forms an integral part of the Employee Induction programme for new employees and the CEPG has commissioned a range of courses on Diversity to be delivered in the near future for front line staff and middle managers.

The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy has been revised and the CEPG are working on the review of the Race Equality Scheme and developing the Council's Equality Plan based on the impact/needs assessment in relation to race, gender and disability that was carried out by all Services last autumn in order to comply with level 2 of the Equality Standard. Other current work includes developing Diversity at Work leaflet (for prospective and current employees).

An audit of the workforce has just been concluded which in part deals with equality issues in relation to ethnicity gender and disability by reference to grade and the Council's establishment. The Council struggles to achieve its workforce targets in respect of the numbers of disabled employees and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. As a result, the council now positively encourages job applications from those groups of candidates. The Council also participates in and has offered supports to the Equal Project a government funded initiative developed by St Martins College which is designed to improve job opportunities for minority communities within the district.

4.SUSTAINABILITY

Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership

The Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Partnership has recently changed its name to the Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership (so it means more and sounds less like a local postcode). The Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership is one of the seven 'Building Blocks' of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The structure of this partnership is a Steering Group (20 members from the voluntary, business, public and community sectors, with officer support), 5 Topic Groups and 2 sub groups.

The five Topic Groups are open to all organisations and individuals in the district who want to work positively together to deliver and improve a cross section of sustainable projects and services.

The Recycling Forum

The Recycling Forum has produced a new Recycling Directory (2nd Edition, April 2005) that presents the sum of all recycling and waste minimising opportunities in the district in a very 'hands on' user friendly format, both as a handy A5 booklet and on the City Councils website. It includes services provided by the City and County Council, local community enterprises as well as community groups and individuals.

The Recycling Forum also hosts public events. In 2004/5 held a Recycling Fair and a Recycling Question Time - with a panel of 7 people from local organisations generating answers to over 40 questions.

The forum put forward a priority project for Cabinet support in 2004/5 - 'Waste minimisation and Recycling for Businesses' – to investigate the needs of local businesses and encourage more sustainable waste management systems through joined up working and information. This project proposal has now been further developed and will be presented to Cabinet in the near future.

The Wildlife Forum

The Wildlife Forum shares knowledge, skills and best practice at its bi-annual public Wildlife Open Evenings, in the Lancaster Town Hall. The last event on 'Wildlife Friendly Gardening' involved 7 presentations and attracted about 90 people.

The Wildlife Directory aims to increase volunteering by providing information on local volunteering opportunities with the organisations on the Wildlife Forum. It provides hyper- links to partners' websites and e-mails. It is currently available on the City Councils website with the aim of producing a booklet in the near future.

This forum's priority project supported by Cabinet for 2004/5 was the 'Parks for People and Wildlife' – improvements to local parks to reach and maintain 'Green Flag' status. Williamson Park has been entered into this year's round.

The Food Forum

The Food Forum's priority project supported by Cabinet for 2004/5 was to develop and improve the Farmers' Markets in the district to meet needs of farmers and customers. The forum helped with consultation with customers and farmers in Market Square and with promotion. The market is a now thriving event every 2nd Saturday of the month. The last market on 9th April linked into 'The Taste of Lancashire' festival.

The Five A Day projects included 5 growing schemes, 3 cooking schemes, 50 - 100 tasting sessions with 20 + agencies and many different groups Improve cooking skills. These activities encouraged cooking and eating as a sociable activity.

The Food Forum is working with one of its partners, the Adult College to develop a course to produce a local food directory and is investigating the possibility of a local food festival.

The Sustainable Transport Forum

The Sustainable Transport Forum has developed and is now implementing the Walking Strategy. A local walking and cycling map is being developed. The Sustainable Transport Forum also provides a forum in which people can find out how to influence decisions on transport, ask questions and make their views known to decision-makers, e.g on the Local Transport Plan. It hosts themed meetings and discussions including on 'Transport for the Elderly', Travel Plans, 'Young People's transport issues'. The forum meeting on 'Rural Transport Issues' led to actions to fund improvements to rural bus stops by LSP in 2004/5.

This forum's priority project put forward for Cabinet support for 2004/5 was 'Improving availability, co-ordination & attractiveness of local public transport information' through partnership working (pending further development)

The Energy Forum

The Energy Forum is the newest Sustainability Forum. Since being set up in February 2005, it has organised a Carbon Trust energy audit for council buildings and identified some potential sites for renewable energy. The group aims to make small-scale renewables projects more accessible to local residents and groups.

The Education for Sustainable Development Sub-Group

The Education for Sustainable Development Sub-Group produced a schools' resource pack and held a 'Citizenship for a Sustainable Future' event in November 2004.

The Sustainability Media Group

The Sustainability Media Group promotes sustainable activities of organisations and individuals on the partnership and beyond. The 'Agenda for Action' media campaign issued a press release each month to all local newspapers and radio stations since June 2004. In 2004/5 there was a full page on Sustainability Partnership matters in each edition of the City Council Magazine 'Your District Council Matters'.

Green Partnership Awards (GPA) scheme

The Green Partnership Awards (GPA) scheme provides grants and professional advice for a diverse range of community environmental projects. In 2004/5, 12 local community projects were supported. The scheme is now entering its 5th year in the Lancaster District. In 2005/6, grants in the region of £500 are available for waste reduction and re-use of materials, environmental education and events as well as practical environmental improvements.

Funding is provided by Lancaster City Council together with its three partners, the County Council, United Utilities and the Environment Agency. Professional advice is provided by officers at the City and County Councils. This partnership scheme enables and empowers local people to take part in environmental improvements that benefit of the local community.

Sustainability Checklist

A Sustainability Checklist has been produced in line with the Sustainability Partnership's Strategy 'Agenda for Action'. It is a tool for assessing and hopefully improving the sustainability of projects, programmes and policies at the City Council.

A similar checklist has been developed for use by community groups

The Local Growth Partnership is developing a project to encourage and support local people and community groups to grow (cook, eat and celebrate together!) their own food. A study of local need has been completed (consulting with over 45 groups) and is being used as a basis for funding bids.

Allotments

The Allotments will now be developed as community resources by the City Council in partnership with Allotment Secretaries, and ALMA (Association of Lancaster and Morecambe Allotments).

5. YOUNG PEOPLE

Services to young people across the Lancaster District are provided not only by the City Council but also by the County Council and various other partners who have statutory obligations and / or funding to deliver excellent services. As such, it is considered appropriate that other organisations and partnerships should take the lead. Thus leaving the City Council with capacity to focus on areas where it will have greatest impact such as; representing our communities' interest and by bringing communities and agencies together to work in partnership to maximise the positive impact on the quality of life of the young people of the Lancaster District.

The City Council actively engages its partners through the LSP and its Building Blocks. One of the seven Building Blocks, the Children and Young People's Building Block, has a specific remit to consider service provision for the children and young people in the District. In December, the Building Block raised the issue of 'housing and young people' in the district at the LSP Executive Group, and resulted in actions reported above. It is presently considering setting up a sub group who's remit will be to look at how best to engage with both older children and younger children, with a strategy written for all ages.

In addition to the work of the Children and Young People's Building Block, the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved at their meeting on 2 February 20054, to set up the Young People and Lancaster City Council Task Group to consider the following issues:

- Whether the Council has suitable mechanisms in place to actively involve young people.
- How the Council currently involves young people in its decision-making, operation and provision of services, (including but not limited to consultation and communication).
- To form a view over whether this follows best practice and is of a suitable standard.
- To examine whether Lancaster City Council should adopt 'Hear by Right', (standards for the active involvement of children and young people, produced by the Local Government Association and National Youth Agency).
- How the Council is contributing towards the promotion of citizenship locally and review the activities of Local Democracy Week.
- To ascertain whether the Council is doing all that it can to ensure Lancaster City Council is a suitable environment to enfranchise young people.

It is intended that the Task Group will have completed their task by the early autumn.

CORPORATE PLAN ISSUES

This year the City Council has identified 21 key High Level Actions which will help to deliver its priorities.

The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 2. Improving the health and wellbeing of our citizens and employees, reducing health inequalities by working in partnership.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 4. Consulting, listening and communicating with the public and our partners to ensure that the services we provide are driven by their needs and priorities.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 7. Tackling discrimination and prejudice against any individual or community celebrate and embrace diversity and actively promoting tolerance within our district through working in partnership.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 16. Protecting and enhancing the environmental wealth and bio-diversity of our District.

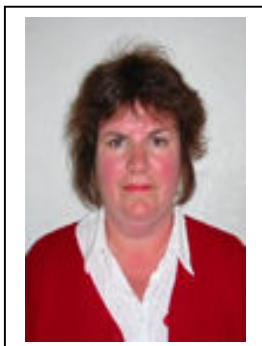
HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 19. Improving the links between sustainable development and economic vitality.

CONCLUSION

The focus of the work of the LSP and the building blocks is clearly on the challenge of trying to realise the aims of the Community Strategy. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that this is a difficult task. However much progress has been made in the last year in establishing good working relationships and structures to help ensure that it happens. I think it is important to remember that the Community Strategy is a long-term vision (2020) and that change cannot happen overnight. Some funding has already been directed to priorities in the strategy and the focus of the work over the next year will be continuing that work.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JANICE HANSON, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSPORT



Transport and Engineering Services are a high priority for local people and this is recognised in our Corporate Plan. My report is an overview of our major achievements in 2004/05 and looks forward to some of the high profile subjects we will be tackling in 2005/06.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Performance Review Committee.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

The main areas of responsibility are all those activities delivered through engineering services in particular:

- sea and coastal defences
- car parking responsibilities and enforcement
- working with the Highway Authority in a partnership to agree highway improvement programmes in our district

ENGINEERING SERVICE:

Achievements in 2005/06

- Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement was a difficult subject to negotiate and we entered into a partnership with the County Council and NCP from 06 September. This is now operating very successfully and effectively managing our car parking. I would like to congratulate all the people involved in this change.
- We were successful in attracting external funding for the River Lune Millennium Park Enhancement Project and most of this work is now finished.
- Again externally funded as part of a national pilot project, the Poulton Home Zone Scheme and the 20mph zone have been completed.

- A 3 year programme to action residents car parking schemes was agreed by Cabinet with four schemes consulted on. Three of those are now moving to consultation on detailed design. The fourth scheme at Bowerham was withdrawn because the majority of residents were opposed to it. This is a good example of how we listen to local residents and respond to their concerns – and something we will continue to do.
- Support for the Northern Route option of the M6 link was agreed and we are working with the County Council on public presentations of the preferred scheme.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

Future Developments for 2005/06

The Corporate Plan for 2005/06 in Priority 3 includes “....making our local environment cleaner and healthier including managing transport and parking.” Priority Outcomes are:

- to improve parking provision for residents local businesses and visitors
- managing transport more effectively so as to improve the safety of our citizens

To achieve these priority outcomes we will take action to:

- implement our cycling and walking strategies
- work with the County Council on the M6 Link Road project
- support the development of Travel Planning in the District and action our own Business Travel Plan
- deliver a programme of road safety schemes – to include 20 mph zones and local safety schemes
- complete a comprehensive car parking strategy and continue with our programme of residents car parking schemes
- agree the new 5 year Local Transport Plan developed by the County Council. In particular looking for support to develop sustainable and public transport policies
- start work on phases 6 and 7 of the Morecambe Coastal Works – although again this still depends on successfully negotiating an agreement on compensatory land. In anticipation of a successful outcome, we have procured a construction partner

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Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

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For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

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HIGH LEVEL ACTION 9: Improving the provision, integration and use of road, rail, cycling and walking networks.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 10 Making it safer to use the roads and pavements in our district.

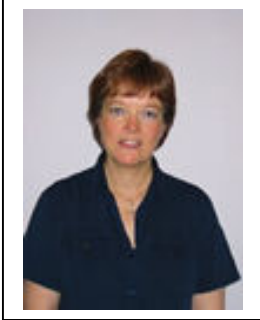
HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 16 Protecting and enhancing the environmental wealth and bio-diversity of our District.

CONCLUSION:

Once again, 2004/05 has been a hectic – and sometimes controversial year – for my portfolio area. The interest in Transport is reflected by the number of times Overview and Scrutiny have considered Transport topics. The support of officers in Engineering Services and the help of Cabinet Transport Liaison Group is much appreciated.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JOYCE PRITCHARD, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



Health experiences are very much what this portfolio area is about. Safe, secure and healthy housing is a fundamental requirement for all of us, along with safe food and water and a non - polluted environment. My report looks at some of our achievements in the last year and looks forward to the challenges in 2005/06. A great deal of the protective work in this area is statutory and this will grow with the new Housing Act and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act coming into force in 2005.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

N/a.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

This portfolio covers three main areas of activity, Council Housing, Environmental Health and the Strategic Housing function which includes housing standards enforcement. Once again, this has been a very busy area of work which ranges from working at regional and sub-regional level and the Regional Housing Board through to basic health issues such as rats and dog fouling.

Achievements in 2005/06

Council Housing

- The Service has gone through a major restructure with the centralisation of offices at Cable Street and the amalgamation with Building Maintenance Services. This has reduced costs to our tenants whilst piloting new ways of delivering our repairs service to be more responsive to our tenants needs. One direct outcome of becoming more specialised is the reduction in tenants arrears.
- The outcome of a fundamental "Options Appraisal" of the future management of Council Housing gave us the option of retaining our own housing which is what our tenants favoured. This has now been agreed with GONW.
- We have also made a big investment in replacing our software packages and the new repairs module now supports better problem identification over the telephone and the booking of appointments for repairs.

Strategic Housing

- Progress has continued to be made around the issues of homelessness despite severe staffing problems for at least 6 months of this financial year. Some progress has been made in preventing homelessness by early intervention working with landlords and tenants to try to prevent repossessions. Other partnership preventative actions include a mediation service operated by the YMCA and outreach services offered by a variety of voluntary services. The Council has been particularly instrumental in enabling the provision of 20 units of accommodation via Adactus Housing Association. Ten of these units are specifically dedicated to homeless families. An additional Housing Advisory Officer post has been secured through the budget process.
- Strategic Housing was awarded Best Supporting Organisation in the national Neighbourhood Management Awards given by ODPM in recognition of the coordinated way housing services are delivered in Poulton.
- With the introduction of a charge for the administration of Disabled Facilities Grants, the Council was able to establish new posts for the delivery of Home Improvement Agency type services. An advocacy worker post has been established to provide housing options advice, referrals to other health or social care agencies and investigation of other sources of funding for repair works. This will plug a gap for much needed services to enable elderly and vulnerable people to maintain independence in their own homes.
- The master plan for the West End has been formally adopted by the Council. Officers have been working closely with consultants to identify areas targeted for intervention in Phase 1 and several property acquisitions have been made.

Environmental Health

- Coordinated a successful litter and dog fouling poster competition in local schools which received a tremendous response and resulted in the winning designs being made into signs and placed around the district.
- The Street Warden Scheme has come to the end of the original 2 year funding and the evaluation carried out highlighted just how successful the wardens had been in Poulton and the West End. The scheme is secured for at least another year now with funding from Community Safety Partnership, Poulton Neighbourhood Management and West End Partnership. The 'new' scheme will have 2 wardens covering the whole district, 2 in West End and 2 in Poulton and a warden supervisor. Joint tasking with the Police is planned as well as an emphasis on environmental crime such as litter and graffiti.
- The Service has led on the Headstone Safety programme and due to the careful planning, organisation and management, the project is progressing well with very little adverse reaction from the public. Funds have been earmarked from within grounds maintenance to continue the programme into this financial year.

- The Service has made a major contribution to the Smoke Free Morecambe Bay Partnership and was instrumental in achieving smoke free Council venues accessible to the public. Further work is ongoing, concentrating on encouraging local business such as restaurants, clubs, bars to go smoke free. A smoke free premises award scheme is to be launched in July this year.
- Maintained the percentage of high risk food hygiene inspections undertaken at 97.5%, whilst at the same time making efficiency savings. by reducing the hours of one post.
- Although we had a disappointing outcome in the prosecution of Fats & Proteins – officers have continued to work with the new management of the company and secured a willingness from the company to implement a programme of improvements through the new IPPC system.
- The Service has been particularly successful with enforcement activity in 2004/05 with 4 formal cautions issued for dangerous dog attacks, 4 fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling and 8 fixed penalty notices issued for litter offences. From these 8 fixed penalty notices, there are 3 prosecutions pending. In addition, the Food team has taken 3 food hygiene prosecutions and issued 7 formal cautions for food related offences. One of these prosecutions included offences of fly tipping/depositing litter unlawfully.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN 2005/06:

The new Corporate Plan identifies a number of priority outcomes which are either directly or indirectly within my portfolio area of responsibility:

- Safeguard the continued provision of Council Housing as a social housing option in Lancaster District
- Improving private sector housing conditions
- Improving our services to homeless people
- Supporting phase 1 of the West End Masterplan
- Support/take action to help improve the cleanliness of our streets

Some specific actions are:

- modernisation of working practices and conditions in Building Maintenance Services and the development of partnering procurement
- upgrading Mellishaw Park Travellers Site
- improving services to our tenants and improving satisfaction
- improving efficiency and reducing costs to make sure we have a viable 30 year Business Plan

- working with the County council on the development of the Moor Platt site for supported housing
- housing renewal as the focus for regeneration in the West End
- review and update our District Wide Housing Strategy
- improve how we deal with homelessness to further reduce dependency on Bed and Breakfast and reinforce the links with our Housing Association partners
- make positive use of the new Housing Act and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act to support a safer, healthier, cleaner district.

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For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 2. Improving the health and wellbeing of our citizens and employees, reducing health inequalities by working in partnership.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 3. Providing a plentiful variety of affordable and secure housing in places where people may choose to live.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 13 Improving the cleanliness of our streets, alleyways and local environment.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 20 Using the planning system to enhance and preserve the quality of life for those who live and work in the City, Coast or Countryside and to preserve and promote the heritage of our private and public buildings.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 21 Regenerating brownfield land in order to provide local jobs and create business opportunities and encourage inward investment.

CONCLUSION

I am very pleased to report that significant achievements have been made in my portfolio area against all the priority tasks identified in the 2004/05 Corporate Plan. However, the need for and the provision of affordable housing is a major area of

concern which still needs to be addressed in detail through our revised Housing Strategy.

Thanks to all the people working hard in the areas of my responsibility – I have enjoyed the wide range of activities and the support I have received and look forward to the challenges of 2005/06.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR PAT QUINTON, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR RURAL AFFAIRS



Over the last two years I have found this rural portfolio frustrating but very interesting. At the end of this year, bringing together the various aspects of the report I am convinced that rural issues are becoming more important to the Cabinet and Council.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Grants Committee.
- Lancaster and District Chamber Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Recycling Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Arnside and Silverdale AONB (Limestone Heritage Project SC).
- Arnside and Silverdale AONB (Forum and Countryside Management).
- Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee.
- Lancashire Rural Partnership.
- Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group.
- LGA Rural Commission.
- Northern Reaches Steering Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

The rural portfolio by its nature is cross-cutting and involves itself in all aspects of Council services and policy. The rural area contains one-third of the District's population in a variety of small communities all with their own priorities and issues. Effectively meeting rural need is a challenge for the Council but one that is starting to be addressed by having a district focus on rural issue in the Cabinet. In the last year some significant progress has been made.

Achievements in 2004/05

- The Carnforth Market Towns Initiative has continued to make good progress and subject to the detailed outcome of the Urban Design Study £1m will be available over the next three years.
- The Canal Waterbus has had a successful first season and will be expanded in the forthcoming year to capitalise on leisure opportunities.
- The Farmers Market has been successfully piloted and will be linked with the Lancaster Market provision to both provide an outlet for local produce and link with health targets around healthy eating.
- Hornby Village Institute is progressing well with its plan for refurbishment as a rural hub for services. The City Council provision to support the contingency fund was instrumental in securing other external funds to allow the project to progress
- Community Groups in Wray and Caton have received some funding from the Council's e-ogvernment pot to assist the work they do in encouraging the use of IT and Broadband in their villages.
- Funding to assist the development of rural businesses has been secured from the Lancashire rural Recovery Plan and the European Regional Development fund. The funding package has meant that more Council business development grants can now be accessed by businesses across the rural area.
- The Corporate Plan has recognised the Parish Councils as the third tier of local government and regular briefings between Corporate Strategy and the LAPTC are improving communication between the City and Parish and Town Councils.
- Work with Arnside and Silverdale AONB has progressed well with the new management plan undergoing extensive consultation and being adopted. The new working arrangement with the Countryside Agency have seen funding increase to the AONB over the last year and the AONB team have been able to respond effectively and still maintain a high level of volunteer support. The Forest of Bowland AONB has also benefited from the new management regime and as Cabinet Member for rural affairs I have played a role in the development of both sets of plans.
- The roll out of three stream waste collection has been piloted in the rural areas successfully and by the end of 2005/06 the majority of rural areas will be involved in the scheme.
- Transportation and flooding are key issues for rural communities and Cabinet have made provision for preliminary investigative work into flood alleviation schemes in rural areas. Implementation of flood alleviation schemes will potentially be picked up by the Environment Agency which would then release funds for further investigative work.
- The River Lune Millennium Park has been extended to Glasson and Middleton using external funding and pilot schemes have been developed to allow joint use between pedestrians and horses. A River Lune Millennium Park User Group has been established to assist with the future management of the Park.

- The City Council continues to support the Rural Area Road Safety Committee set up by the LAPTC to ensure rural concerns are fed into the policy and decision making process of the transport authority, Lancashire County Council.
- Leisure provision has sought to target specific needs in the rural area and working in partnership with local groups bowling provision is made on a regular basis, rural after-school club provision is supported and a rural primary schools 5-a-side football competition is run. Schools in the rural areas use the three community swimming pools at Heysham, Carnforth and Hornby. Well over one-third of participants in the Holiday Activity programme attend from the rural areas.
- Rural settlements have been redesignated for rate relief purposes and, with the closure of the cash offices at Lancaster and Morecambe, payments to the Council can now be made through Post offices. These two changes will help small businesses.
- After two years of partnership working with the County Council, a plan for the site of the closed Moor Platt Residential Home at Caton is expected to come to fruition to provide sheltered housing and care services for elderly people in the Lune Valley.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

The continued focus on ensuring rural proofing makes meaningful inroads to future policy development and service delivery will be vital. The continued development of Carnforth Market Towns Initiative will be important in establishing Carnforth as a significant centre serving the rural hinterland. Continuing to seek to influence regional policy marketing, particularly around rural recovery, tourism and business development will be important to ensure that rural issues do not get lost in a regional debate that increasingly focuses on urban areas. Ensuring the housing needs study is translated into effective rural housing policy will be a key task for 2005/06, as will ensuring the new planning local development framework develops to provide the right infrastructure for sensitive rural development. There is a need to achieve sustainable development and yet have enough development to keep settlements and villages viable and alive. It will be crucial that the work of the Vision Board in developing a new economic vision for the area will take full account of rural issues and I will be watching with interest the emerging work of the Board throughout the year.

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HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 4 Consulting, listening and communicating with the public and our partners to ensure that the services we provide are driven by their needs and priorities.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION 9: Improving the provision, integration and use of road, rail, cycling and walking networks.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 16 Protecting and enhancing the environmental wealth and bio-diversity of our District.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 17 Ensuring that the whole district, City, Coast and Countryside has a vibrant, varied and viable local economy and targeting deprivation and unemployment in parts of our district.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 18 Attracting the maximum number of visitors to our district and to provide a high quality environment for them to enjoy.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR RON SANDS, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR TOURISM, ARTS, LEISURE AND MUSEUMS



Regeneration is vital to the future prosperity of the district and an improved quality of life for residents. Some of the large high profile projects are integral to the success of regeneration but equally important are those services that enrich people's lives. This report outlines the progress we are making in improving quality of life for residents and visitors and highlights some of the challenges for 2005/06.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- British Resorts Association.
- English Historic Towns Forum.
- Lancashire Tourism Partnership.
- LGA Tourism Forum.
- Lifelong Learning.
- Morecambe Resort Action Plan Steering Group.
- Museums Advisory Panel.
- Tern Project Working Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Achievements in 2004/05

Arts and Events

The work of the Arts and Events Service relies on partnership working with a number of different agencies to provide a broad and comprehensive programme of events. In the last year the investment in the Revenue Clients; The Dukes, Ludus, More Music in Morecambe, The Storey Gallery and Litfest has attracted approximately £1,500,000 external funding into the District. This is on top of the grant awarded to The Storey Creative Industries Project which has attracted a grant promise of £693,000 for the capital programme from Arts Council England North West lottery funds.

The Arts and Events Team successfully delivered a summer programme of festivals including The Festival of Light and Water, The Lancaster Jazz Festival, The Punk Festival, The Heritage Gala, The Georgian and Maritime Festival, The Summer Lunchtime Concert Series and a busy Guided Walks and Special Events season. Morecambe's accommodation was fully booked up over both The Festival of Light

and Water and Punk Festival weekends. This year Arts Council England North West awarded a grant for the Jazz Festival to take musicians into schools, the first time we have run an education programme alongside the festival.

The Platform programme moves from strength to strength attracting National and International performers and has become the base for many community activities ranging from Dog Shows to Art Exhibitions. The venue was featured on television three times in the space of ten days with Lloyd Grossman's programme on interesting places to visit in the North West, a feature on the My Little Pony Convention, and Morecambe Band's Brass Blowathon. The venue was also host to BBC's Question Time programme giving Morecambe national exposure.

The Dome played host to a varied amount of events throughout the year including The Morecambe Music and Dance Festival, Bob Geldof, A tribute to the Cocklers Tragedy and various Dance Nights for young people.

The Arts Development Officer has been seconded for 4 days a week for six months to work as project co-ordinator for the Storey Creative Industries bid. At the same time the team are working on The Stamp Project, a commemoration of Lancaster's slave industry. The team act as a resource base for community groups, artists and schools and have assisted people with bids to external funders throughout the year raising through matched funding over £100,000.

Portfolio Development

There is clear support for the arts and cultural development although it is a discretionary activity and any future development will need to be driven by partnership, innovation and external funding. The establishment of the Festivals Innovation Fund will allow the Council to support private sector and community sector innovations in a new model of delivery which I hope will foster a developing festivals programme. With the arts, our focus will increasingly be on cultural industries and the arts as an economic driver for the district. The continuing development of the Storey Institute project and the potential for the St Martin's feasibility study to contribute to the West End renewal are two examples of work we will undertake this year to develop culture industries.

Leisure

2004/05 has seen a busy year for Leisure provision across the district. The service has undergone a small restructuring achieving some savings but more crucially ensuring the service is organised to make the most of its role in delivering leisure and sports provision and meeting the Council's regeneration objectives. Salt Ayre has continued to provide a strong service increasing customer numbers in conjunction with the Community Pools. In the summer Salt Ayre was also the venue for the Lancashire Youth Games attracting close to 5,000 to the venue over the weekend it was on. The playscheme provision has continued to provide useful activity for young people in the school holidays. Work with communities that are regeneration priority areas has resulted in two new Skateboard Parks in Lancaster and Morecambe, both designed in conjunction with users. Action has been taken to establish a framework for leisure activity in the bay which will become increasingly important as leisure users from the Lake District look for alternative locations. Partnership working has been a feature of the approach to service delivery and a major project to deliver

combined county, district, police and health services at Heysham Mossgate is still under negotiation.

Portfolio Development

The Council's leisure provision will continue to meet traditional sporting and recreational need while increasingly allying itself to the area's regeneration priorities. Facilities at Salt Ayre will be improved later in the year with the Council's capital investment ensuring the pool and poolside area is retiled. This complements previous investment in the new computerised booking system and the sauna and artificial pitch as continuing commitment by the Council to provide top quality facilities. Further work will be undertaken to develop the parks and open spaces strategy to ensure our flagship parks – Williamson Park and Happy Mount Park continue to develop whilst local amenity parks are also given due consideration. The service will continue to work in partnership to develop services and work at Heysham Mossgate is expected to produce positive outcomes in the next 12 months.

Tourism

2004/05 has been another busy year for the tourism section and the TICs.

Using the latest figures available from the Economic Impact Model (STEAM) endorsed by the NWDA, £130m was generated through Tourism for the district in 2003. This is 8% up on 2002 figures of £120m. There were over 6,364,000 tourist visits (inc day and staying visits) made to our district in 2003 compared with 6,073,000 in 2002. Tourism supported 3,000 jobs in the Lancaster district in 2003 of which 2,400 were supported directly.

The bi-annual Destination Benchmarking report has just been produced profiling Lancaster alongside other Historic Cities and Morecambe alongside other Coastal Resorts. Visit characteristics include: Morecambe - majority of visits on a leisure trip or holiday (90%) similar to other coastal resorts. Lancaster - more mixed blend of visitors. Nearly 3/4 were on a leisure trip or holiday, 11% visiting Friends and Relatives, Specialist Shopping Trips (6%) and Business (3%). Two fifths of Visitors to Lancaster were there for the first time (40%) compared with under a 1/3 of Morecambe Visitors (28%).

Accommodation in Lancaster scored well above average for both 'quality of service' and 'value for money' - higher than the average scores for other historical destinations. Accommodation in Morecambe scored well above average for both 'quality of service' and 'value for money' and higher than the comparable results for other coastal resorts. Attractions in Lancaster scored above average for all categories for 'value for money', 'quality of service' and 'range'. Attractions in Morecambe scored above average by respondents for 'value for money' 'quality of service' and range scored only average.

Marketing activity included production and distribution of the Official District Holiday Accommodation Guide, Group Travel Brochure, Events Flier and Attractions leaflet. Partnership work helped produce a New TERN leaflet, new Pendle Witches Trail Tour and Leaflet, and new Carnforth Visitor Leaflet. Distribution of our literature was through the National Tourist Information Centres (TIC's) and our Destination Management System (Integra). Publicity and responses have been generated by our Advertising Media Campaign, presence at Travel and Holiday Shows (in Manchester, Bolton and Birmingham), visits to our Official Internet Visit sites, and PR work. Monitoring of all our responses is ongoing to feed into future plans and our direct

mailing system. The Tourist Board's various marketing publications and new themed campaigns, starting with the 'Country Escapes' (Autumn 2004), have been supported. Support for Business Tourism has included exhibiting at Confex (Conference Destinations Exhibition) in London and continued working with the Lancashire Conference Desk. Online accommodation booking on our websites has been introduced in partnership with the Tourist Board. This has been piloted from November 2004 onwards and will be opened up to all operators in spring/summer 2005.

Lancaster TIC in 2004 dealt with 116,834 enquiries including 85,339 through the door and generated £100k income. Morecambe TIC in 2004 dealt with 190,968 enquiries including 160,099 through the door and generated £181k income. TIC initiatives have included the Lancaster Accommodation Booking Hotline. Supported by funding from the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board the Accommodation Booking Hotline will be in operation from March - August 2005.

Staff have been active in responding to the consultation documents and Destination Management Plan produced by the new Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board. Marketing staff now have a seat on the LBTB marketing group. Tourism Staff continue to represent the Council on the British Resorts Association and the English Historic Towns Forum. As a result, the tourism section hosted a joint EHTF and Tourism Society "Dark Tourism" conference in Lancaster, in November 2004, and attended a parliamentary briefing dinner in October. Press visits have been hosted and national publicity has resulted, including 1 and 2 page features on Carnforth's 60 year celebration of "Brief Encounter", and coverage of rural breaks in the Express. Additional good publicity was obtained for Morecambe in early December following Urban Splash's start on the Midland Hotel.

Support for Budgie Bikes at Lancaster Station resulted in both the scheme and the tourism section being awarded the "Connections 2004" award for the "Most Innovative Approach for Cycle-Rail Integration". Morecambe TIC was Winner of the Tourist Information Centre of the Year award from the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and the tourism section was nominated in the LETS awards for the Tourism Team of the Year, the only public sector representation in the whole of the 2004 awards.

In July, the tourism section arranged for Virgin Trains to name one of its new Pendolino units, "City of Lancaster", and was also instrumental in co-ordinating the national tourism response to the new Community Rail Strategy. Staff continue to work towards the restoration of the Lancaster Canal beyond Carnforth and towards the implementation of the 2 AONB strategies.

Work has continued on developing a new tourism strategy for the District with a public consultation meeting being held at Carnforth on 1st March 2005.

As a result of EU funding, a German student worked for three months translating leaflets into German and French, preparing for the International Access Conference and carrying out visitor assessments of Lancaster and Morecambe.

Portfolio Development

The authority will continue to work in partnership with both the private sector and the newly formed Lancashire and Blackpool Tourism Board to build in the area's unique tourist offer. The development of the opportunity presented by the award of historic city status by NWDA will be a key focus of activity in the forthcoming year. Lancaster

is one of five towns and cities in the north west being given targeted support by NWDA to develop its tourism potential.

The Service will also focus on the review and development of the tourism strategy for the district.

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The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 11 Increasing the number of people participating in the Council's Leisure programmes and increasing the number and range of facilities available.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 12 Utilising culture in its broadest sense to promote City Coast and Countryside.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 18 Attracting the maximum number of visitors to our district and to provide a high quality environment for them to enjoy.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 20 Using the planning system to enhance and preserve the quality of life for those who live and work in the City, Coast or Countryside and to preserve and promote the heritage of our private and public buildings.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR ALEX STONE CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS



This year has again been a challenging time for Council Staff and Services. Over and above the services expected by the general public and Councillors, Council Staff have been challenged to further improve services, implement new legislation, including the new Licensing and Freedom of Information Acts, whilst continuing to find necessary savings to meet the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and objective to keep Council Tax rises to a minimum.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Grants Committee
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Performance Review Committee

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES Etc:

None.

MEMBERSHIP OF PARTNERSHIPS:

None.

CABINET LIAISON GROUPS:

- Chair - E-Government Cabinet Advisory Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

For the Municipal Year 2004/2005, my Cabinet responsibilities for Internal Affairs have included Legal Services & Licensing, Revenues and Benefits, Property Services, Administration Services & Civic and Ceremonial Affairs, Personnel and e-Government. The following report details my work and progress with each service area and highlights significant achievements made by each department and future challenges that will need to be met in 2005/2006.

LEGAL SERVICES & LICENSING:

The greatest challenge for Legal Services during the last year has undoubtedly been the preparation for the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003, ensuring that there are sufficient trained staff and suitable systems and procedures in place to deal with the mass of applications that will be received during the transitional period from February to November this year.

The Service has also given legal advice and been involved in property transactions in respect of a number of major projects, including Luneside East and Morecambe West End regeneration. The Fats and Proteins prosecution was perhaps the largest case dealt with this year. Unfortunately the jury verdict was not what the Council had hoped for, but that should not detract from the hard work that went into preparing for a four week trial. The Service was also involved in dealing with two difficult pension matters raised by the District Auditor.

The Service has this year appointed a legal officer to deal with anti social behaviour, the post being funded through the Community Safety Partnership. It is hoped that this post will be seen to make a real difference in combating anti social behaviour in the future.

REVENUES & BENEFITS:

2004/05 has been a very busy year for Revenue Services and one of the most successful ever.

The Business Plan set the Service an ambitious target of 44 actions to complete during the year and progress against achieving these targets has been outstanding.

Those particularly worthy of note are:

- A 39% improvement in the number of days to taken to process a new benefit claim
- A 52% improvement in the number of days taken to action a notified change of circumstances affecting a benefit claim
- The extension of opening times of the Revenues reception area where over 80% of callers are dealt with at the first point of contact.
- A successful take-up campaign to encourage claims for Council Tax Benefit
- A very successful project to change the software used for the administration of Business Rates within a very tight time-scale.
- An improvement in "in-year" collection rates of Council Tax
- The closure of the Cash Offices and the provision of swipe cards and bar coded invoices enabling customers to pay at Post Offices.

Overall improvements in efficiency and performance have led to the Service being in a position of strength as 2005/6 begins.

2005/6 will be a year of different challenges for the Service and these include:

- Achieving top quartile performance for key Benefits Performance Indicators
- Continuing to improve take-up of Benefits and working with key stakeholders to do so.
- Self-assessment against the new Performance Standards launched by the Department for Work & Pensions in March 2005 and the subsequent revision of our Improvement Plan.
- Implementation of electronic methods of payments to landlords & claimants
- Further improvement of Council Tax collection rates
- Achievement of Charter Mark for excellent customer service
- Implementation of the Government's "E" agenda

PROPERTY SERVICES:

Markets

As part of the overall review of the Markets, the staffing arrangements have been restructured. New market managers are in place at both Lancaster and Morecambe and the structures for their staff are agreed. This has made staff more accountable whilst meeting the requirements of traders for more effective management.

The Festival Market continues to be successful but we cannot afford to be complacent. We need to ensure that customers are still attracted to the market. In Lancaster the indoor market has been the subject of much debate by the Markets Committee. New leases are being agreed with the traders and a greater focus made on attracting new traders. A review of the Assembly Rooms market will be held in 2005/06.

The Charter Market is expanding slowly following agreement to relocate stalls. The Farmer's market in Lancaster continues to expand, following its move to the second Saturday of each month. It's re-launch in December was a particular success, with activities in Market Square that gave the atmosphere of a Festival to the City Centre

Lancaster City centre was again visited by a Continental Market on two occasions and discussions are underway to repeat and expand visiting markets in 2005/06, perhaps with links to local produce as well.

Accommodation

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the provision of accommodation and whilst the main outcome for the year was the successful move of the Housing Service to Cable Street, significant work is being undertaken with a view to assisting the Access to Services Review. This is one of the most important pieces of work undertaken by the Council for many years, and will have a significant effect on the Council's accommodation over future years.

Maintenance and Repair

Significant additional funding has been made available as part of the process to improve the state of repair of the building stock. This increases the pressure on staff to procure the necessary work, as there has been no increase in staffing at the same time. However, after years of under-funding, this is a welcome start to future investment in the property portfolio. It is understood that the next round of CPA monitoring will place a greater importance on the management and maintenance of the Council's asset base.

Energy

New arrangements with the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation have been agreed to ensure that the Council benefits from the largest local authority buying power in the country. Contracts for the purchase of gas and electricity are arranged through this organisation and the Council now has managed to arrange that all its major buildings use renewable electric supplies.

Capital/Revenue Finance

After many years of waiting, the Kingsway site has finally been sold and the long awaited capital receipt has been received. At present there are limited sales of property in the disposal schedule for the forthcoming year. However, there will be a number of property sales possibly arising from the Access to Services Review in future years.

Regeneration

Property Services provides professional support on the Council's regeneration initiatives, whilst the Council's assets are used to facilitate a number of Regeneration schemes, e.g. Storey Institute and 4/5 Dalton Square. Work is also underway as part of the West End Master Plan process, the Luneside East scheme, Port of Heysham and the former Shell/ICI site at Heysham. Whilst that work will continue, there will be an increasing workload with the development opportunities arising from the Central Promenade Development Brief and the Canal Corridor North Development Brief.

CCTV/Community Safety Partnership

The CCTV system has now been upgraded to digital recording giving a much improved image quality. New cameras are being erected on North Road and the Ryelands estate. New management arrangements via Remploy were put in place at the start of the year and are working well. The system continues to play a major part in deterring crime and helping to assist detection.

The Head of Property Services continues to chair the Lancaster Task Group of the Community Safety Partnership, working closely with partner agencies to successfully reduce crime and the fear of crime.

ADMINISTRATION SERVICES & CIVIC AND CEREMONIAL AFFAIRS:

Members Services

New roles for staff in Members Services following the departure of Yvonne Swain has provided an opportunity to look at the traditional annual events and see if they can be organised more efficiently and effectively. Some small changes have been made so far and with the help of an internal audit working procedures are now more robust.

The big event for 2005 is the hosting of the Youth Games in July and a lot of time has already been spent in preparation.

Democratic Support

Another year of high staff turnover has added to the challenges facing the Democratic Support section but a new team is now in optimistic mood to take this section forward. The past year has seen the implementation of the new Overview and Scrutiny structure, which was unfortunately slow to take off, in part due to staff absences, but is now progressing. A new style Annual Report is being introduced and I am sure the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny will comment on this.

The other major success and challenge has been the introduction of a computerised committee management system which in tandem with the roll out of lap tops to Members has allowed electronic publication of committee documents (thereby

creating savings on the printing and distribution of hard copies) and also provided the opportunity to improve access to councillor and meeting information on the website. There is however much still to do on this. With the provision of laptops to a majority of Members and the publication of all Agenda and Minutes now taking place electronically, I am pleased to report that changes are now being made to change the way documents are supplied and distributed to Members in order to achieve the desired cost savings as well as improving access to information for members, Officers and the public.

For 2005/06 work will continue on reviewing the operation of full Council and implementing any changes that Members wish to see. It is hoped also to make improvements to the support to Executive Members in line with those made to Overview and Scrutiny Members. The Service is also being called upon to support the new Licensing Act Panels – it remains to be seen whether this will have a significant effect on workloads.

Elections Office

A major event for the Service in 2004 was the successful administration of all-postal voting in the European elections – the first time we have carried out an all-postal ballot in this District and made all the more challenging by the late introduction of the relevant legislation.

The downside has been the significant take-up of postal voting on demand since then – providing a considerable additional administrative burden in terms of processing.

Telephone registration was also introduced at the last canvass – there were no difficulties encountered albeit with relatively little feedback from electors. With greater publicity it is hoped that there will be an increased take-up of the facility this year. By the time this report is published a combined County and Parliamentary election will be upon us and the challenges of organising that are being felt by the whole Service already.

Other

The Freedom of Information Act was implemented on 1st January 2005, and whilst it has not had the 'big bang' impact that some were forecasting, Administration have been the lead Service in preparing for implementation – producing policies and procedures and ensuring that all staff were prepared. The Information Management Officer is now being kept busy co-ordinating and monitoring the Council's responses to FOI enquiries.

The three year Service Level Agreements with Non-housing voluntary organisations were up for renewal this year and a lot of work was put into reviewing these. Community Capital Grants have also been introduced and Administration Services have produced a scheme and process for awarding these grants on an annual basis.

I am looking forward to a successful Youth Games which this year will be hosted within our district. A lot of effort has been put by officers and voluntary organisations to ensure its success. I am sure the event will be enjoyed by competitors and spectators alike and will help to further enhance the civic links between ourselves and our twin towns.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

Sickness Absence record

Having secured significant improvements to absence levels in 2003/04, this improved position has been maintained in 2004/05 and a further marginal improvement achieved. The Council continues to be supported in the provision of occupational health services by Salus OH and a programme of training support in managing attendance continues to be an integral part of the Corporate Training programme. The Council Sickness Absence Management Policy was revised in early 2004 and Return to Work interviews are mandatory feature of the policy.

Job evaluation

Local Authorities are required as part of the 2004 Pay Settlement to develop a Pay and Workforce Strategy. One of the two Job Evaluation schemes being piloted by the Council (with a sample size of 50 jobs) has been fully completed and the second one is almost finished. The Single Status Working Group expects to prepare a report for Management Team who will in turn report to Cabinet and Personnel Committee in the future about the merits of each scheme in relation to implementation within the authority. Whilst JE is not a mandatory feature of the Single Status Agreement, (and there are other alternatives that may be considered) it is widely regarded as the most comprehensive means of conducting a local pay and grading review.

Carrying out a local pay and grading review (whether or not it is JE) will provide the opportunity to review and possibly remove features of the Council's current pay policy including bonus payments, which have the potential to conflict with equalities legislation in relation to pay and reward.

Investors in People

Work continues towards achieving liP for the whole Council. The EDPA process which provides an annual development interview for all employees are underway at the present time. The Council aims to achieve an improvement on a return rate of 80% for Development Action Plans at the end of this cycle. Each employee will have the opportunity to discuss their development needs in relation to their own individual objectives and their Service Business Plan.

As part of the Pay and Workforce Strategy for local authorities there is a requirement to include a Workforce Development Plan. This Plan should describe the assessment of training and learning needs within an authority (based on the business objectives) and set out actions to meet those needs.

The Council is about to embark on an ambitious programme working internally with over 100 managers to build leadership and the capacity to manage performance well, which is also part of the Pay and Workforce Strategy which is under development. The development and delivery of the programme is widely regarded as an integral part of the Council's push to liP for which Assessment is expected to take place during 2006.

Customer Contacts Centre - new department - progress on recruitment etc.

A team of 5 staff has begun work on the new Customer Service Centre Project - all staff have been recruited internally on a two year secondment basis.

The team comprises a Customer Services Project Manager, Customer Service Team Leader, 3 Customer Services Advisors.

The posts vacated internally by these secondments have all been offered as secondment opportunities to be backfilled internally.

The Customer Service project will "go live" on the 8th June and, during the pilot phase, will take telephone calls about areas of work currently handled by CCS. Over 350 calls per day are received about fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, missed bins, street cleanliness enquiries etc. As part of their intensive Induction and training period, the Customer Service Advisors recently spent 2 weeks at White Lund Depot shadowing the operational teams to prepare them for the calls they may take.

In addition, the Customer Service team are working towards a "Certificate in Customer Service Excellence" and are learning how to use the new Customer Relationship Management System. Training is going well and the project is running on schedule. The Customer Service Team are looking forward to June the 8th when the real work starts !

Review of Chief Officers Terms and Conditions

During 2004/05, a review of Chief Officer's pay was carried out by NWE0 using the GLPC Job Evaluation Scheme for Chief Officers of Local Authorities. Personnel Committee at a meeting held on 01 September 2004 approved changes to the remuneration packages for Chief Officers which involved the consolidation over time, of the car leasing arrangements into actual salary. The salaries for posts at this level were deemed to be slightly adrift when compared with similar type posts in similar authorities elsewhere. The preferential lease car scheme for posts at this level has been discontinued and no further car leases will be entered into when the current ones expire. The maximum contribution made by the Council towards a car is 12% of salary and this is now incorporated into salary as either a 12% increase (where no leasing arrangement has been entered into), a combination of car lease plus salary (subject to a maximum of 12% total where the cost of the lease is less than that annually) or a continuing car lease with no further supplement if the cost of the lease is equivalent to, or exceeds 12% of salary.

During the course of the review and as part of the report findings NWE0 commented that the authority had a unusually high number of officers on Chief Officer terms and conditions for an authority of this type and size. personnel Committee accepted those findings and resolved to review the number of Service Head posts within the authority - that review is currently in progress.

Review of Personnel Staff Structure

The Personnel Service has been redesignated - Human Resources and Organisation Development Service - to assist in developing and recognising its strategic role within the authority. The service has experience significant turnover during the course of the year, largely connected to colleagues being absent because of maternity leave. A minor restructure has taken place within existing budgets, resulting in the staffing costs of the Service remaining static. Whilst the Service Head considers that the current staffing for the Service will be adequate tackling what is a very stretching forward agenda, this position will remain under review particularly within the context of the pay and grading issues. The Service is currently carrying two vacant posts but expects to be fully resourced by the end of May.

Review of Smoking Ban in Enclosed Public Spaces - initiatives to help employees quit smoking etc.

The Personnel Committee approved the Smoking Control Policy with effect from No Smoking Day - 9 March. Smoking has been banned wherever it is possible to enforce such a ban, in places where Council employees work. Employees who find it necessary to smoke during the working day now do so in their own time, provided it is operationally accepted to be absent from work for a short period. On a positive note, the Council's policy provides support via OH and the Smoking Cessation Service for employees. The Council will provide some time off with pay for employees to investigate initially at least, the support available on smoking cessation.

Review of Personnel Business Plan in Star Chamber

As a result of the Star Chamber process during the year, additional training funds will be made available from 2006/07 - this is to be welcomed. Some changes have also been made to improve the processes relating to disciplinary investigations and the need to suspend employees where disciplinary offences appear to be potentially serious. Particular attention will be given to the length of time suspensions, when used, are in effect with a view to shortening these periods of time wherever possible. The Star Chamber exercise recognised the need to 'reshape' the Personnel Service at the end of the operating year and were encourage by the recognition that this would be done within the existing budget. They also acknowledged that this was primarily planned within that context of possible JE (or a mandatory local pay and grading review) during 2006/07 and the impact of that on the workload. It was also noted that there would be a need to consider the impact of any local pay and grading review supported by possible changes to pay policy within the context of the Medium Sickness absence Term Financial Strategy.

E-GOVERNMENT:

The Council is actively working towards the end of 2005 target of e-enabling services and the specific Priority Outcomes which must be achieved by March 2006. I have expanded the E Government Cabinet Advisory Group to include more member representation and the group has overseen the defining of a Vision for E Government and the creation of a challenging and comprehensive programme designed to improve the way that we provide services to our citizens and visitors. The programme covers all aspects of modernising both our internal and customer facing work and includes substantial investment from the Council's Capital Programme as well as the Implementing Electronic Government funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Two core items in the programme are the creation of Customer Service points, covering both telephone and face to face services and the creation of a Lancashire wide 'portal'. The Customer Service teams will ultimately deal with every kind of query and customers will be able to ring one number about any issue, or visit the Council's website, email the Council or visit in person. Customer Services will use specialist software know as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to record, track and monitor calls. This will be linked to a special telephone system which will allow staff to see how quickly calls are answered, who is calling, if any calls are waiting etc.

Geographic Information Systems to support Customer Services and various other Services have also formed a major work item over the past year. These systems

allow information to be displayed in map forms – for example a map showing the district with the street cleaning round information.

The Lancashire Portal is a specialised website which provides links to information from many different sources and also allows community groups etc. to create their own websites. The Lancaster City Council website is being revamped and relaunched ahead of the new portal launch and will be fully compliant for the new national accessibility guidelines.

Several key business systems including Business Rates, Repairs, Cash Receipting and Leisure have been replaced in the past year along with PCs and technical infrastructure across the entire network. Laptop computers are being delivered to all Councillors along with high speed connections enabling them to access email and the Councils Committee Admin systems from their homes.

Following a very productive meeting last year with group leaders regarding democratic modernisation and the pilot project for member's laptops, I plan a similar review of the projects progress next year. This will give members the opportunity to express any concerns they have with the project so far and help produce recommendations for future improvements. In addition, I also intend to review the problems recently experienced by members regarding the Councils Internet service provision at the next advisory group meeting, where we will consider how the current level of service can be improved.

CORPORATE PLAN ISSUES:

This year the City Council has identified 21 key High Level Actions which will help to deliver its priorities.

The City Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to the Lancashire District Local Strategic Partnership by adopting the 10 themes from the Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives. The 21 High Level Actions overleaf form the Council's medium term priorities. We know that these are the right priorities for us, because the people of the district told us so through the Community Strategy Consultation.

The action plans also take strong account of Cabinet priorities and the CPA Improvement Plan.

The High Level Action Plans have adopted in order to deliver its own priorities and the 10 aspects of the Vision in the Community Strategy.

For this portfolio the following High Level Actions have been identified: -

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 2. Improving the health and wellbeing of our citizens and employees, reducing health inequalities by working in partnership.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 3. Providing a plentiful variety of affordable and secure housing in places where people may choose to live.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 4 Consulting, listening and communicating with the public and our partners to ensure that the services we provide are driven by their needs and priorities.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 5 Managing our organisation, guided by the principles of openness, integrity and accountability in our role as community leaders and ensure our services offer quality and value for money.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 6 Seeking to improve the ways we communicate externally and internally by using new information technology and innovation.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 8 Providing effective and efficient training and extending development opportunities to every employee and elected Member. Contribute to partnership working with the LSP Lifelong Learning Building Block.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 10 Making it safer to use the roads and pavements in our district.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 15 Conserving non-renewable resources.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 17 Ensuring that the whole district, City, Coast and Countryside has a vibrant, varied and viable local economy and targeting deprivation and unemployment in parts of our district.

HIGH LEVEL ACTION: 20 Using the planning system to enhance and preserve the quality of life for those who live and work in the City, Coast or Countryside and to preserve and promote the heritage of our private and public buildings.

CONCLUSION:

There has been significant progress made by services under my responsibility this year in response to Coalition Priorities, government legislation, government targets and our ongoing Access to Services review. I believe the Council is meeting these challenges and putting measures in place which are strengthening the Authority, making it more responsive, open and accountable to the public.