



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Executive Annual Report 2005/06

April 2006

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Foreword from the Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet

I am pleased to present the Executive Annual Report for 2005/06.

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. This Annual Report is part of that accountability system. Further developments, recently approved, in principle, by Council will include an enhanced ability for the public to ask questions at Council meetings.

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. For the first time this year, there was consultation with the public on the Corporate Plan and the Consultation Strategy is being revised, so we are becoming a more open and outward looking organisation too. 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

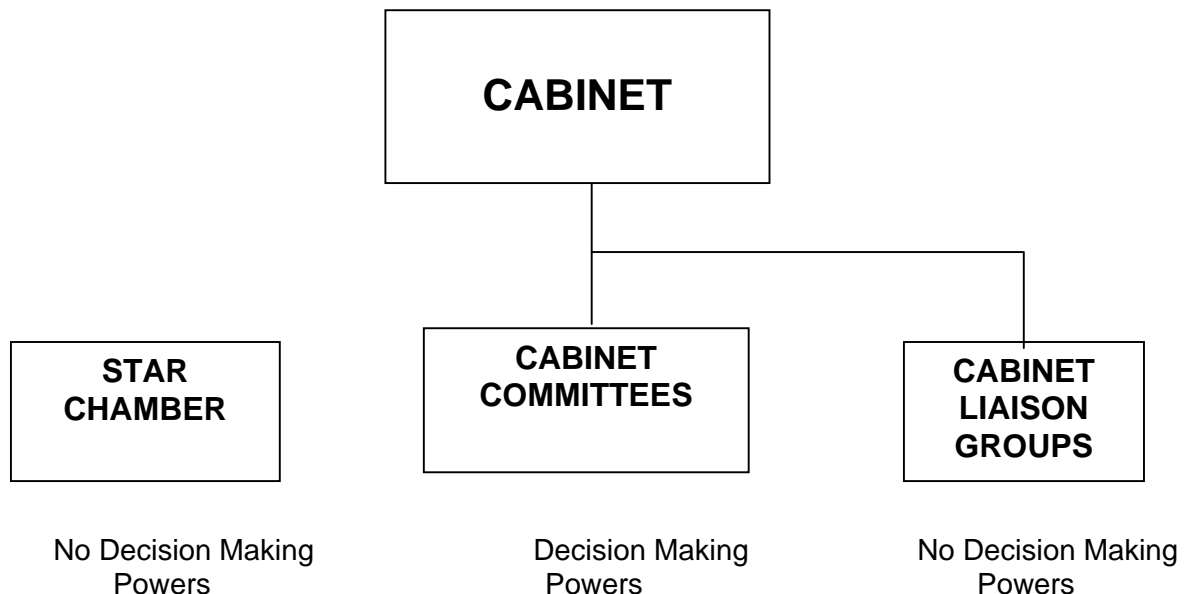
Decision making arrangements

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, Finance and Human Resources.
Jon Barry	City Contract Services.
Eileen Blamire	Community Safety, Emergency Planning and Legal and Licensing.
Abbott Bryning	Economic Development and Lancaster Regeneration.
Gina Dowding	Community Planning, Diversity and Sustainability Partnership.
Janice Hanson	Engineering and Morecambe Regeneration.
Joyce Pritchard	Council Housing, Environmental Health and Strategic Housing.
Pat Quinton	Planning Policy and Rural Affairs.
Ron Sands	Arts and Events, Leisure, Museums and Tourism.
Alex Stone	Administration, Information, Property and Revenues.

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



CABINET COMMITTEES

At present there are 2 Cabinet Committees who operate under delegated powers for decision making. These are: -

- Grants Committee;
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee;

The former Performance Review Committee of Cabinet was created to review performance, a single Scrutiny Committee was created replacing the former review boards and within this the Budget and Performance Panel was created to scrutinise performance. Under these arrangements there had been the potential for duplication and overlap of the way in which Cabinet and Scrutiny review performance.

Performance Review Committee's role has, in the main, been taken over by 'Performance Review Teams'. The recently created Performance Management Framework recommended that the Committee be discontinued to prevent any duplication or confusion with the Budget and Performance Panel and its remaining functions were transferred to the Performance Management Group, Performance Improvement Team and the Budget and Performance Panel.

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 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 February 2005 until February 2006 143 Executive Decisions have been taken. Of these 72 were Key Decisions. 2 decisions were 'called-in' for further examination by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The table below shows the number of decisions each Member was consulted on: -

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	7	46	3	3
Jon Barry	5	3	1	-
Eileen Blamire	-	-	1	2
Abbott Bryning	20	3	2	1
Gina Dowding	1	6	2	-
Janice Hanson	11	4	6	-
Joyce Pritchard	17	9	2	1
Pat Quinton	8	-	9	1
Ron Sands	7	2	6	-
Alex Stone	19	11	15	1

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 had been involved in the decision jointly with another Member or, in the case of urgent business, where the Member had been consulted by the Chief Executive.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

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

INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to present my third report as Leader of the Council. The Council has continued to make good progress during this year. We have just received an encouraging Annual Inspection and Audit Letter from the Audit Commission which recognises good progress in a number of areas. Inspection is, however, only a tool. What counts is what we deliver. There have been a number of significant achievements during the year. I will pick out a few.

The pilot phase of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) was successfully rolled out. This has led to significant improvements in the way we hand customer requests for environmental services. More importantly, it has provided significant information to enable us to improve services. As a result Cabinet has decided to alter the way we collect bulky waste by going into partnership with Furniture Matters. This should give a better service, albeit at a cost, to customers and increase recycling rates. We have not yet rolled out the walk-in centres or published standards of service across all services. The latter will be developed as services migrate to the customer care centre.

The intention is to transfer much of our Benefits Service, which has achieved upper quartile ratings on all indicators, to the CSC approach during the year.

Last year, I highlighted a number of regeneration projects. We can see the physical progress that is being made on 4/5 Dalton Square. Other parts of the EDZ programme are at an earlier stage. However the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Inquiry on Luneside East was concluded with agreement with the major objector and we have appointed a principal developer so that physical progress should happen in 2006/07.

In the West End, progress is being made with our partners Adactus and English Partnerships in delivering better housing conditions.

Levels of family homelessness were reduced as a result of increased resources going into preventative work and a partnership with Adactus to provide more temporary accommodation.

The Council successfully hosted the Youth Games with the assistance of a volunteer organising committee. I do think this is a valuable institution and one that we could get more out of in building international contacts and understanding. This year we did invite the civic guests to a debate on "Europe – Whatever Next?", with assistance from the European Parliament, and I think this was very successful.

Lancaster was one of six towns chosen for Cycling Demonstration Town Status. The intention is to double the rate of "utility cycling" over three years.

My colleagues will, no doubt, expand on these and other achievements in their reports. It is only fair for me to record two major disappointments.

I was disappointed that the County Council chose, unilaterally, to end the Lancashire Highways Partnership. This will mean a loss of engineering capacity to the City Council. Despite the fact that City Council (Direct) Services (CC(D)S) remains a contractor partner, the loss of the street lighting function means that there will be a net financial cost to the City. Perhaps most importantly we lose the element of local determination of highways priorities. Some of this may be regained through the Lancashire Local. However, financial contributions from the City to Highways will have to be reduced to cover the deficit mentioned above.

I was also disappointed that the Council was unable to decide on a way forward to deal with its accommodation issues. It is common ground, I think, that we spend far too much on buildings that we could be spending on services to the public. What has not been agreed is the way forward. This has delayed the development of walk-in customer care services. Hopefully, the public consultation that has been commissioned will allow us to make progress.

I would like to record my thanks, both to my Cabinet colleagues for the collegial way they have worked over the last three years and to the officers of the Council for the help and assistance they have given. It remains a continuing pleasure to work with them.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP 2005/06

- 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.
- Morecambe Liaison Group.
- Performance Review Committee (part).

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.
- North West Regional European Partnership [\[3\]](#)
- Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board [\[4\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) European Regional Development Programme

[\[2\]](#) European Regional Development Programme – shared with Councillor Val Stevens, Manchester City Council.

[\[3\]](#) NWRA appointment to represent the Lancashire sub-region

[\[4\]](#) Representing Lancashire Districts. Not yet met

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

LEADER OF CABINET

The responsibilities of Cabinet Members are:

Councillor	Portfolio
Barker	Leader, Finance and Human Resources.
Barry	City Contract Services.
Blamire	Community Safety, Emergency Planning and Legal and Licensing.
Bryning	Economic Development and Lancaster Regeneration.
Dowding	Community Planning, Diversity and Sustainability Partnership.
Hanson	Engineering and Morecambe Regeneration.
Pritchard	Council Housing, Environmental Health and Strategic Housing.
Quinton	Planning Policy and Rural Affairs.
Sands	Arts and Events, Leisure, Museums and Tourism.
Stone	Administration, Information, Property and Revenues.

There have been some changes in responsibilities during the year. I have taken over responsibility for Human Resources; Councillor Quinton now has responsibility for Planning Policy as well as the Rural portfolio; responsibilities for regeneration in the urban core have been divided between Councillors Bryning and Hanson with Councillor Bryning retaining overall responsibility for Economic Development and Councillor Hanson retaining responsibility for Engineering and Transportation.

Cabinet took a step forward in public involvement in consulting on the Cabinet Priorities for 2006/07. A number of members of the public and organisations responded. Although the top three priorities remained unchanged, there were many refinements and alterations in the others.

FINANCE

The major aim of the finance portfolio is to deliver the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. This is to keep Council Tax rises below 5% while strengthening the Council's financial position and to have an affordable capital programme balanced over five years. At the same time a prudent view has to be taken of future years' commitments. This years Council Tax rise was 4.5%, in the urban core, including special expenses— the lowest for seven years.

However, as important was the fact that we were able to deliver some significant elements of growth. As well as the built-in growth for the next phase of three stream recycling, there was significant growth in respect of street cleansing, civil contingencies, cemetery maintenance and further support for concessionary fares.

On the capital side, there was also some modest growth, including a commitment to a four-year programme of improvements to children's playgrounds.

Provision was also made, financed from underspends in 2005/06, to increase the reserves for Job Evaluation and Access to Services. This is a prudent measure that will enable us to tackle new future commitments.

The process for achieving this is Star Chamber. The emphasis of Star Chamber has changed over the last three years from looking at immediate savings to commissioning more medium and long-term work on efficiencies. This ties in well with the Government's Gershon agenda. Thus the improvements listed above have been delivered without any major cuts to services. A better than expected financial settlement and the impact of previous years decisions delivered the savings target while the savings identified during the year delivered the growth.

Despite a large number of staff vacancies during the year, Financial Service performed well and achieved the statutory close down of accounts a month earlier than in previous years. I would like to thank Nadine Muschamp and her staff for her assistance during the year.

Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) has seen considerable staff turnover during the year. Nevertheless progress has been made on a number of Council priorities. I would like to thank the former Head of Service, Julie Johnson, and her staff for their help in what is a new field for me.

There has been a reduction in staff sickness absence during the year. This has been helped by the occupational health arrangements, which it is hoped will be improved further. Nevertheless, this is part of the efficiency agenda that we must make further progress on.

The Council has agreed a scheme for Job Evaluation. Implementing it is a major task for the year.

There has been some organisational change during the year, which has both affected HR and which HR have had to help progress on behalf of the Council. The restructuring of Service Heads posts has inevitably caused difficulties and worries for some of the individuals most affected. I would like to recognise their professionalism.

CORPORATE ISSUES

Performance Management

Following a review of the way the Council manages performance, the Cabinet Performance Review Committee was stood down during the year. In future, Cabinet Members will be responsible for performance management of the Service Business Plan relating to their individual portfolios. The Leader and the Budget and Performance Panel will receive reports of the relevant meetings. In addition, there will be quarterly monitoring by the Leader and the Budget and Performance Panel of around 30 KPIs.

Local Governance

One of the issues that has risen to prominence in recent months has been the issue of local governance. The Minister for Local Government and Communities, David Miliband, has launched a wide-ranging consultation on these issues, with the theme of “double-devolution”, and a local government white paper is planned for the summer. There is also the Lyons Inquiry, which is running in parallel, and has been expanded to include issues of local government functions as well as finance.

The City Council has responded by setting up a Local Governance Committee which has submitted evidence to Lyons. As Leader, I have been involved in a number of consultative meetings with ministers and civil servants, and other local authority leaders and chief executives.

At this stage, we do not know for certain where all this is leading. However, there are clear opportunities for the District which the City Council needs to grasp if it possibly can. It is appropriate, therefore, for me to set out what I think these are.

I have deliberately entitled this section “Local Governance” and not “Local Government Reorganisation”. The unitary debate and the boundaries of possible future unitary authorities are part of what this debate is about, but they are only part of it. It is as important to look at the other issues on Mr Miliband’s agenda: devolution to neighbourhoods and the roles of councillors.

First there is an opportunity to look at how we deliver services to neighbourhoods. We have established some good practice in Poulton in which the three ward councillors and local people, supported by Poulton Neighbourhood Management, have influenced the way in which services are delivered to local people. In the West End, ward councillors are closely involved in the Winning Back the West End project. Could similar structures operate successfully, maybe over a wider area, without the additional funding that these programmes bring?

Secondly, there is the role of Councillors. It is my view that elected local Councillors are the best people to deliver the neighbourhood agenda mentioned above and to be spokespersons for their communities. They need to be involved with local people and organisations, but their elected status gives them a greater degree of legitimacy.

Thirdly, there is, of course, the issue of local government reorganisation. The Council’s preference for a unitary structure is long established.

Whether or not this happens, it is clear that we do have to form stronger links with other authorities in order to provide joint services at lower cost. We do need to make progress on this, irrespective of reorganisation

Fascinating as this is to local government anoraks, we also have to remember that it is not an issue of any salience at all to most electors. They don’t, on the whole, care about structures: they care about the quality and cost of services. So our tests of any governance structures ought to be: “Will new arrangements deliver better and more responsive services and will they provide better value for money?” And, as we debate the best way forward, we need to be sure we don’t take our eye off the day job: delivering better and more responsive services that provide better value for money using current structures.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities for 2005/06 relevant to my portfolio responsibilities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Corporate	To adopt a new economic vision for the district
Corporate	To improve the Council
Finance	To meet the financial targets set within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and provide local people with cost effective services.
Human Resources	To ensure that our staff feel that their contributions are valued

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Limit Council Tax increases to 5% or less in 2005/06 and 2006/07.
Develop Customer Contact Centres in both Morecambe and Lancaster. There will be a radical look at our buildings to make them both more efficient and more accessible to all our citizens. The standards of service that customers can expect will be published and the complaints system will be revised.
Continue to seek opportunities to work together with other local authorities or public bodies to achieve efficiency gains.
Establish what the priorities for the City Council are in its role in the provision of community development and work with young people

I will mention issues not touched on elsewhere in this report

As a Member of the Vision Board, I have worked with public and private sector organisations and the North West Development Agency (NWDA) to produce a new economic vision. This is currently out for consultation and has yet to be considered formally by the Council.

The Council has commented on the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy and I have had some input into this as a member of the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA). However, the bulk of this work has fallen to Councillor Bryning supported by officers from the Economic Development and Tourism Service.

The monitoring of the Council's Improvement Plan was the responsibility of the Performance Management Committee. Under the new arrangements, it will fall to the Leader. A number of the actions in the original Improvement Plan have now been "ticked off" and others are substantially complete. However it is refreshed as the result of successive external inspections and challenges. The CPA is now over two years old and we do not yet know exactly what will replace it for district councils. The

Council will need to consider during the coming year whether it should undertake a corporate health check to inform future plans.

Opportunities to work with other councils are being actively pursued. Planning a joint Building Control Service with South Lakeland and Barrow is at an advanced stage. Councillor Quinton is taking responsibility for taking this forward.

The ending of the Lancaster Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) has forced the Council to reconsider its Community Development Partnership with the County Council. The City will take responsibility, working jointly with the voluntary sector, for delivering partnership work in Lancaster south of the Lune, while the County will take responsibility in Skerton. More generally, the Corporate Plan for 2006/07 will reflect Every Child Matters as was recommended by Overview and Scrutiny.

CONCLUSION

I am very pleased with the progress made this year but, as this report indicates, there is still a lot more to do. We are an ambitious Council, ambitious not for the organisation alone, but for our community. That means that there will always be challenging work in progress and no room for complacency.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JON BARRY, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CITY CONTRACT SERVICES



I am pleased to report that real progress has been made through City Contract Services (CCS) against Corporate Plan Priorities in 2005/06. We now have a firm foundation upon which we can build further improvements in 2006/07. Change and the rate of change will continue to deliver our Corporate Priority *“To make our District a cleaner and healthier place”*

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

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

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Waste Management Strategy Steering Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

This portfolio covers everything carried out by City Contract Services, including :

- Street Cleansing
- Grounds Maintenance – parks, open spaces, highways verges, roundabouts
- Highways sub-contracting work for the County Council in the urban core areas
- Public toilets
- Management and maintenance of the Council’s vehicle fleet

Building Maintenance is now integrated with the Council Housing function and is no longer within CCS and, from 30th June, street lighting will move to the County Council linked to their decision to end the Lancashire Highways Partnership.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2005/6

Waste and Cleansing

- Rolled out 3 stream waste to 10,000 more properties. Over 30,000 properties now on scheme

- By the year end estimate that 25% of household waste collected will be recycled
- Developed plans for improvement of bulky waste collection service by working in partnership with Furniture Matters.
- Anti-litter action plan 'Putting Litter in its Place' will be published by financial year end
- All Community Safety Officers (CSOs) in District now trained to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)
- 4 CSOs to deal primarily with environmental issues will be in place by October 2006
- City Centre anti-litter charter launched
- Selected as District for DEFRA's summer anti-chewing gum campaign

The 3-stream recycling scheme continued to expand with another 10,000 houses joining the wheelie bin club. Within the next two years we hope to have achieved at least 90% coverage. Challenges for the future include the recycling of plastics and modifying our scheme for flats. I also attended several meetings to try to launch a schools recycling initiative although this has yet to happen. The new MBT plant at Middleton also received planning permission this year and should be one of the first four to be built by the County Council.

The Council is also entering into a partnership with Furniture Matters for them to take over our Bulky Waste collection. This should result in 50% of the stuff being recycled. Currently, it is all thrown onto landfill. The new system will also allow appointments to be made to collect items. There will, however, be a charge to make up for the extra cost of the new system.

This is my main priority area for the coming year. I think I say this every year, but I really mean it this year. We have had increased cleansing in the town centre and we organised a service improvement meeting in March where we talked to all of the workers involved. The Customer Services Centre has highlighted areas for improvement but I am glad that the volume of calls has been decreasing throughout the year.

Grounds Maintenance

- Strategy for refurbishment of playgrounds from 2006/7 developed
- Tree policy implemented
- Continued success in competitions

Highways Maintenance

- Secured work as sub-contractor to Lancashire County Engineering Services following dissolution of LHP but without street lighting

VMU

- Appointed new fleet manager to improve efficiency of fleet management

Public Conveniences

- Plans developed for improvement of toilets in 2006/7

Tenders are now out for new toilets at the Clock Tower and the Arndale Centre (in that order). We may not have enough money for both.

Overall

- Work opportunities provided to 18 long-term unemployed people via Job Guarantee Initiative
- NVQs awarded to CCS (cleansing, building cleaning, grounds maintenance) staff
- CCS services in first stage of Customer Service Centre and the use of information generated to improve services

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07

- One of our three overriding priorities is "Improving the cleanliness of our streets and public spaces" and this will be the main focus of my attention during 2006/07

Other priority areas which are included in the Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are:

- Modernise the way we deliver our services and how CCS - the first Service to develop within the Customer Service Centre - will use improved data and information to improve services
- Roll out further phases of the recycling and waste management programme until complete and investigate ways of improving recycling for commercial waste. Growth has been allocated through the budget process for 2006/07 to support this further extension
- Rationalising and reviewing public toilet provision whilst reducing costs. The Capital Programme for 2006/07 has allocated £150,000 to support this improvement programme - initially at the Clock Tower toilets in Morecambe, then the Arndale Centre

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY, EMERGENCY PLANNING AND LEGAL AND LICENSING



The Partnership has worked well during the year to reduce crime and to reassure the public. The demanding targets set by the Government will require all the partners to work even harder to meet them.

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 year began with the introduction of the Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008.

Government has placed upon the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) a stringent target to reduce crime by 16-19%. We aim to meet this by placing attention on the key indicators of alcohol related violent crime and criminal damage. We are not meeting this target at present. This has been discussed in the Strategy Group and working groups are being set up to deal with the issue. Close links are being formed with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the development of an Alcohol Related Harm Group.

Although Lancaster met its targets of PSA4 and 8 (youth offending and re-offending) Lancashire as a whole did not and we will not receive performance reward grant in relation to these targets.

A prioritisation exercise has taken place where we have prioritised the projects which we are funding in accordance with how closely they meet our targets. A spending plan has been produced for 2006/07. Key projects are: Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)/Wardens, Tower, XS, Sal's Place, Lancaster District Women's Aid. The Arson Reduction Project and the Cleaner Safer Greener project will not be

funded from April 06. This is also the case for the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Para Legal.

It is aimed throughout that year to integrate the Wardens Scheme into the new PCSO scheme. The new PCSOs are likely to come on line from September 2006. There are, at present, Wardens located in Morecambe West End and Poulton and a mobile service, which is tasked by the Officer Working Group on a three monthly basis.

City Council Officers are working on a Litter Strategy which involves a press campaign to raise awareness of the requirements of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act, i.e. that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) can be issued for littering (cigarettes and chewing gum). CSP underspend has been used to purchase cigarette stub plates for litterbins.

Four PCSOs are focusing on the cleaner, safer, greener agenda.

Two personal safety training events were held for City Council staff.

An audit of activity around Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act has been carried out with Service Heads.

Work is taking place around Prolific and other priority offenders and an action plan is being developed to improve methods of working.

The districts are liaising with Lancashire County Council to produce a Local Area Agreement for spending of Safer and Stronger Communities Funding from April 2006.

The district benefited from extra street lighting of £40,000 due to a successful bid from the CSP.

Work is taking place around the Neighbourhood Policing agenda. Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings are taking place, some of which are successful, while others are trying to find suitable venues to encourage attendance. Criminal damage has been identified as a major problem throughout Lancashire and the Community Safety Partnerships are combining to tackle it with "hotspots" identified and given particular attention.

Legal Services

2005/06 has been a particularly busy year for Legal Services, with the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003. Although applications under the new Act could be submitted between February and August 2005, the bulk of the applications were received in July and August, which placed a heavy burden on staff. To the end of January 2006, 830 applications for personal licences had been received, and 584 applications for premises licences. Of these, 234 were straightforward conversions of existing licences, and 251 were variations, with 99 new applications. Hearings before sub-committees of the Licensing Act Committee were held in respect of 56 applications. These necessitated attendance by a solicitor to give legal advice to the sub-committee and to assist in formulating the decision.

Although the workload for licensing staff was very heavy throughout the year, statutory deadlines for dealing with applications were met, and all licence documents have been issued. This has been an outstanding achievement given the volume of

applications, and the difficulty of dealing with a completely new legislative regime of licensing.

The Service has continued to provide legal support to other Services of the Council. In particular, the Service has been involved in the legal aspects of a number of important property developments - Luneside East, Morecambe regeneration and the Canal Corridor.

There have been a number of successful prosecutions for litter offences, offences involving dogs, breaches of planning control and benefit fraud. The Service has also been able to use new legislation to obtain a demoted tenancy following anti social behaviour by a Council tenant. The Service particularly benefited from the role of the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer. This was an additional resource for preparing court cases in respect of all aspects of anti-social behaviour and indeed for taking preliminary action to deal with matters without the need for legal proceedings.

The Local Land Charges aspect of the Service's work has continued to provide a high standard of service with almost 97% of searches being completed within 5 working days. Technology has enabled officers to deal with most of the highway aspects of searches without direct reference to the County Council, thus saving both time and cost for this Council.

2006/07 will bring new challenges for the Service, in particular the implementation of the Gambling Act 2005 and the need to provide support for the new regime of licensing of houses in multiple occupation, as well as ongoing legal support for the Council's enforcement activities in respect of planning and the environment.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Community Safety	To help residents to feel safe in their community
Emergency Planning	To reduce all crime in the District – with a particular focus on criminal damage and alcohol related crime
Legal & Licensing	To reduce anti-social behaviour in the District such as littering, nuisance or rowdy behaviour, criminal damage and vandalism

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Review the Environmental Warden and PCSO schemes in conjunction with the police with a view to ensuring that they are financially sustainable and that powers are unified where possible.

Use the licensing policy, when adopted, and planning powers to improve community safety.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

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



The economic and social development of our District is very dependent on the success of our major regeneration and renewal capital projects. They lay infrastructure foundations for the future yet are mainly conditioned by access to public and private external funding, planning considerations and sustainability.

The Local Government Association's "City Regions and beyond" report, whilst recognising the "City Regions" and "Core Cities" concepts, has argued for greater devolution of economic development powers to sub-regions.

The new Lancashire Economic Partnership published, in February 2006, its related Sub-Region Action Plan for 2006/07 which demonstrates how the NW Regional Economic Strategy is being delivered in Lancashire in the short term.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Lancaster and District Chamber Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee.
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group.
- Luneside East Advisory Board (Chair)

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Groundwork Trust.
- Lancaster Regeneration Partnership (Chair).
- Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Regeneration Building Block.
- Lancashire Economic Partnership.
- North and West Lancashire Priority 1 Action Plan Partnership Board.
- Local Government Association (LGA) Urban Commission.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Achievements in 2005/06

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cabinet Portfolio – Economic Development /Regeneration

The biggest challenge facing us over the past year has been the continued efforts to implement the Lancaster & Morecambe Economic Development Zone (EDZ) despite the loss of North West Development Agency (NWDA) match funding from a number of key projects.

We have been able to take significant steps forward with several key EDZ projects:

- The flagship scheme of **Luneside East** has secured all its external funding after very lengthy and complex negotiations. A development agreement has been signed with the chosen private sector developer, CTP, following some very lengthy and detailed negotiations, and work has been commissioned from National Grid/Transco to relocate the gasholder and provide replacement facilities off-site. The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) inquiry was held in February and led to successful negotiations between CTP and the main objectors, who subsequently withdrew their objection. The inspector's report is expected early summer.
- Economic development staff have also been working throughout the year to assist businesses affected by the Luneside East scheme to find alternative premises, although this has been handicapped by the general shortage of industrial and commercial property which the EDZ is trying to address.
- **4/5 Dalton Square managed offices** - This project commenced on site in May 2005 and is due for completion in July 2006. It is drawing in £2.6 million pounds of external funding from Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It will create an impressive, state of the art office development in the heart of the city – also contributing towards the townscape of the Dalton Square Conservation Area with a sensitively designed, contemporary building that reflects the heritage of its surroundings. Officers have been working closely with Lancaster University to ensure that tenants can benefit from the University's expertise and it will be marketed as a "sister" project to InfoLab, under the title CityLab.
- **Port of Heysham industrial access** – a £560,000 capital project has now been completed, opening up nearly 10 acres of serviced industrial land at the Port. The first phase of marketing has been completed and sites are being sold to **four local companies**, taking up approximately 40% of the site. These businesses are expected to support 71 existing jobs and create a further 167 jobs by the end of 2008.
- Project development work has also continued on the **Storey Institute** project, seeking to refurbish the building into a Centre for Creative Industries. Following an initial, unsuccessful outline bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) last year, the scheme has been revised to reduce its cost and will be resubmitted to HLF in March 2006, with a decision expected in September or November.

It is envisaged that a management company will be formed to meet a requirement for HLF funding with the building leased to the company upon completion of the capital works.

Cabinet have also made an in-principle decision that the Lancaster Tourist Information Centre should be relocated into the Storey Institute, subject to funding bids. This will provide a new, state of the art facility which will complement the main Storey Creative Industries Centre project by drawing in additional residents and visitors into the refurbished building.

- A further EDZ project has recently commenced at **Heysham Business Park**, upgrading the access road to the industrial estate in conjunction with the Middleton Wood environmental scheme.
- Other EDZ projects moving forward include improvements to the cycleway network with work currently underway to connect the canal towpath with Caton Road, and improvements to the city centre cycle connections due soon.
- Officers have also been working with the new owners of the **Lune Industrial Estate** to support plans for upgrading of the estate and provision of improved workspace. A planning application has been submitted for a revised scheme for conversion of **Thetis House** to create over 30,000 sq ft of workspace, and it is expected that this scheme will commence later this year, with support from the EDZ and Lancaster SRB programmes (subject to approval of current funding applications).

Work is also progressing in conjunction with Lancaster University and NWDA to progress plans for development of **Bailrigg Science Park**, adjacent to the University. An outline planning application has been submitted, and the scheme has been allocated funding within the NWDA investment plan for 2007/08 onwards as a Regional Strategic Site.

It is also pleasing to see that private sector plans for development of **Carnforth Business Park** have successfully gained planning consent, and we look forward to seeing development commence in the near future

BEST Centres closure – Following a review of the future operation of the BEST Centres last year, taking account of changes in external funding, the BEST Centres will be closing at the end of March. Considerable efforts were taken to explore alternative options, including the establishment of a not-for-profit social enterprise and, more recently, a private company, to take over the BEST Centres activities from April, but these have not proved viable. However, the impact of the closure on staff has been minimised by giving over 12 months' notice of the council's intentions, and several staff have been able to leave and find alternative employment in the meantime. It is likely that 5 staff will remain and become redundant (from 11 originally).

A formal response to the **NWDA Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Review** has been submitted and we understand that the references to this District in the final RES have been strengthened as a result.

West End Masterplan

Work has progressed with the West End Masterplan and, significantly, English Partnerships have now confirmed their contribution to taking forward the housing exemplar project. Other partners have contributed to this development of tenure change with a number of the more troublesome Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) now closed and awaiting refurbishment, which in turn has improved the quality of life for residents. With the allocation of "stronger, safer communities", significant strides will be made in the next year with developing neighbourhood management services along the lines that have been successful in Poulton.

Midland Hotel and Central Promenade

The refurbishment contract has continued in the Midland and the hotel is on track to open its doors in 2007. The architectural competition for the Central Promenade produced a strong response and the winning architectural practice, *Flacq*, is now working on detailed proposals that will be consulted on later this year prior to detailed planning applications being prepared.

Frontierland

A mixed-use scheme has received planning approval and work will shortly commence on the retail element of the scheme next to the existing Morrisons store. The first phase will include a DIY store and garden centre as well as a fitness centre with associated retail provision.

Canal Corridor

Progress has been made with Centros Miller as developer partners on a masterplan which will, if successful, enhance the canal corridor area of the city with a mixed use development incorporating a considerable boost for the district's retail offer.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA

Economic Development and
Lancaster Regeneration

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

Ensure that Regeneration Strategy, Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Lancaster.

Continue to progress the EDZ and, in particular, Luneside East. Promote a canal corridor plan that fits in with the Local Plan. Promote the Bailrigg Strategic Site.

Member oversight of the Economic Development Service.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Ensure that Regeneration Strategy, Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Lancaster.

Continue to progress the EDZ and, in particular, Luneside East. Promote a canal corridor plan that fits in with the Local Plan. Promote the Bailrigg Strategic Site.

Member oversight of the Economic Development Service.

CONCLUSION:

Overall, 2005/06 was a busy and fruitful year for the Economic Development and Tourism Services with staff and Members fully committed to ensuring the implementation of the Council's short and long-term priorities. Feedback from the community at large is that there is a fund of support for all our major regeneration capital projects together with an awareness that the District, peripheral to major City Region/Northern Way preoccupations in the North West, must establish its own claims and influence in the general resurgence of the North West's economy and well-being whilst at the same time safeguarding all that is best of the District's city, coast and countryside's advantages.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR GINA DOWDING, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING, DIVERSITY AND THE SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP



A lot of work this year has focused on new Government guidance for Local Area Agreements and the co-ordinating role of the Local Strategic Partnership in their delivery. This has implications for all of the seven 'building blocks', the City Council and all of our partners, and poses two important challenges: firstly that of deciphering the new jargon that comes with it, and also attempting to answer the very important question of exactly who is accountable for what in this new way of delivering services.

I would like to thank all Council officers, staff in other organisations, and volunteers, who have given countless hours of time to partnerships and projects. Together, I believe we have attempted to exploit the opportunities (and challenges) we are presented with to make the district a more sustainable and fairer place, and for improving quality of life in the district.

Gina Dowding

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Diversity and Mellishaw Park Cabinet Liaison Groups
- Lancaster City Centre Management Cabinet Liaison Group
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group
- Cycling Demonstration Town Project Board

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES Etc:

- Lancaster Local Strategic Partnership
- Sustainability Partnership Steering Group
- Equality and Diversity Building Block

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

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

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

1. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Media work

The Council-generated publicity achieved equivalent advertising rate of £0.25m positive coverage in local papers alone, responded to 1,500 media enquiries, issued 350 press releases, negated dozens more potentially negative media stories. We have signed up to and are delivering the Local Government Reputation project. Two media training sessions were held this year for Officers and Members.

Council Magazine

The Access to Services Review residents consultation meeting revealed that everyone present was aware of and positive towards Your District Council Matters magazine. This was described by the Audit Commission as 'remarkable'. There is an increasing demand for space in the magazine.

Council Website

The latest SOCITIM report revealed maximum points for local news provision.

Externally funded project work

Projects supported this year include: Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Storey Institute, Economic Development Zone (EDZ), Luneside East, Sustainability Partnership and Cycle Demonstration Town. Media monitoring and feedback is positive. We have achieved income target, despite being one 'officer down'.

Advertising, Print, Design, Distribution & Photography

We are achieving a corporate 5% discount on Council advertising with L&M Newspapers. We have produced the Print, Design, Distribution and Photography Policy and developed an on-line monitoring system to compare companies. The Photographic Library has been developed with higher quality images – it is well used internally and externally to promote the District.

Consultation

New electronic consultation (e-consultation) website has recently been launched, enabling citizens to contribute and become involved in the democratic decision-making processes via either the web or their preferred method of contact. A revised Consultation Strategy and Toolkit was also re-launched with service 'consultation champions' at the beginning of March.

2. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

LSP Second Home Funding for projects

During financial year 2005/06, both Lancashire County Council and Lancaster City Council allocated the £273,431 of extra income they received from increased Council Tax on second homes to the LSP. The LSP's second home funds were used to support projects, which would help deliver the Community Strategy.

In total 24 small grants were awarded (up to £2,000) and 20 large projects were supported by the LSP in 2005/06, including the following which show the range of partnership work and community / voluntary sector engagement in the district.

- Older Persons Winter Safety Checks
- Cantonese & Mandarin Classes

- Credit Union Finance Scheme
- Carnforth Connect Bus Service
- Portland Street Emergency Accommodation
- Reducing fly tipping/littering & Increased Enforcement Activity

The LSP executive has been working with the building blocks to establish a dozen or so key priorities for the next financial years large grants spending in order to focus spending on the areas identified in the Community Strategy. These are listed below:

- Youth Homelessness
- Integrated Young People's Counselling Service
- Criminal damage
- Community Cohesion
- Financial Inclusion
- Reduce Alcohol Related Harm
- Accident Prevention
- Support formal and informal learning, that will empower communities
- Help and encourage local communities to access information, advice and guidance
- Green Energy advice
- Support social enterprise in the district to deliver a recycling / re-use project.
- Develop the capacity of the community, voluntary and faith sector to engage and participate with the LSP.

Local Area Agreements

During this past year all District Councils and Local Strategic Partnerships have been working with Lancashire County Council and other strategic public sector agencies to develop what is known as the Lancashire Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The LAA is a joint agreement between central and local government to deliver agreed national and local priorities over a three-year period. Where appropriate, various funding streams can be pooled or aligned to ensure they achieve the maximum impact. The agreement is divided into four policy blocks – Safer and Stronger Communities, Health and Older People, Children and Young People and Economic Development and Enterprise. Within each of those blocks are a series of agreed desired outcomes, measures and targets. Achievement of twelve specific targets known as 'stretch' targets will reward those partners involved by allocating 'Performance Reward Grant' in a similar way to the process used in the former Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA1).

Perhaps the most high profile element of the LAA in our district has been the allocation of significant sums of new Neighbourhood and Cleaner Safer Greener funding to develop neighbourhood management in the West End of Morecambe.

The Government has said that LAA's are intended to reduce bureaucracy but my experience over the past year is that it has done everything but reduce bureaucracy. It has been extremely difficult to bring together an agreement that targets local areas of greatest need amongst so many different agencies spread across such a large geographical area. Nevertheless the Agreement has now been submitted for Government approval but I suspect the hard part is just beginning in trying to work out how it is to be delivered.

LSP Conferences and LSP Executive Away-days

The second LSP Conference was held on 29th June 2005 at Morecambe High School. The focus was the successes and achievements of the Building Blocks to date in terms of delivering the Community Strategy. Two away-days were held this year. The first focused on 'Is the Partnership effective?' and considered issues relating to the development of the Lancashire Local Area Agreement. At the second in February 2006, agreement was reached in terms of the coming year's priorities, which are as follows:

LSP: Responding to Consultations

The LSP has responded to many strategic consultations, For example, the Vision document, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, the Local Development Framework Sustainability appraisal, and the Government consultation on the future of LSPs – 'Shaping our Future'.

3. DIVERSITY

Delivery of the Community Strategy Equality and Diversity Agenda

The LSP Executive Group agreed in June 2005 to establish a new Equality & Diversity Building Block (E&DBB) of the LSP. The E&DBB will act as a strategic partnership to oversee and influence the delivery of the Community Strategy with respect to promoting diversity, challenging discrimination and supporting community cohesion. With the creation of the new Building Block there was no longer a role for the Multi Agency Partnership for the Elimination of Discrimination (MAPfED) as an LSP Building Block. As a result, MAPfED was dissolved at a meeting of its Members in July.

The E&DBB have identified Strategic Aims for 2006/07 which include:

- ◆ Participate in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- ◆ Encourage partner agencies/organisations to fulfil their role in community cohesion.
- ◆ Develop good relationships with community groups.
- ◆ Monitoring whether community cohesion is getting better or worse in the District.

The Council remains committed to achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by March 2007.

4.SUSTAINABILITY

Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership

The 'Agenda for Action' Strategic document has nine chapters each relating to different aspects of sustainable development. The Partnership has identified nine priority goals linked to the chapters and has or is developing action plans to deliver these. There are a number of practical projects underway - five projects are currently receiving Cabinet support, five further projects are being developed by the Sustainability Forums. The Sustainability Partnership established links with the Vision Board, Planning Policy Liaison Group and attempts to respond to key initiatives in terms of sustainability appraisal.

The work of the five topic groups is summarised below:

The Recycling Forum

- A constituted group: AGM and Recycling Pub Quiz on 28th March 2006
- Recycle More in Lancaster District postcard project; recycled postcards are being sent to all households in Lancaster district to tell everyone about the Recycling Directory, the Recycling Helpline, the Website, the Forum and the Mailing Preference Service (MPS). After distributing two thirds of these, the number of households registering for the MPS increased from 13.8% to 17.9% (i.e. a 30% increase).
- Recycling Directory: 5,000 further copies of the household recycling directory have been printed and are being distributed via local libraries.
- Business Waste Directory: 1,000 directories printed and will be distributed to local businesses in April via the Trade Waste invoices and Chamber of Trade event.

The Wildlife Forum

- Two public Wildlife events were hosted this year. The autumn theme was tree planting. The spring event will be on the wildlife of the Morecambe Bay coastline, in particular the cockling issues in the Bay as they relate to the wider wildlife and diversity in the Bay.
- The web based Wildlife Directory has been maintained and promoted.

The Food Forum

- 'Eat Local, Buy Local' event was held at Lancaster Town Hall in February 2006. 70 people attended including Councillors and Officers, local producers and procurement managers, environmental groups and members of the public. A local food buffet was provided.

The Sustainable Transport Forum

- Themed meetings have been held on 'Cycle Demonstration Town', 'Car Clubs' and 'Public Transport Operators'.

The Energy Forum

- Lancaster Energy Week: events in Lancaster city centre in March and an open meeting at Lancaster Town Hall.
- Green Energy Store: An expression of interest has been submitted to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for funding towards a development worker to support this project.

Green Partnership Awards (GPA) scheme

The Green Partnership Awards (GPA) scheme provides grants and professional advice for a range of community environmental projects. This scheme has now combined with the LEAF (Lancashire Environmental Action Fund) grant scheme. 21 local community projects were supported in 2005/6 to the value of £10,327 including five recycling projects. The scheme is now entering its 6th year in the Lancaster District. All successful projects will be invited to a 'Celebration of Achievement' event in May 2006

Lancaster City Council provides funding together with its three partners - the County Council, United Utilities and the Environment Agency. The budget for 2006/7 is £5,800 plus additional funds for recycling and environmental arts projects.

The Local Growth Partnership is applying for funding for this project (very limited success) to encourage and support local communities to grow, cook, eat and celebrate food together.

Allotments - Development as Community Resources

Allotments are promoted via the Council's Website and local media achieving a reduction in a number of vacant plots. Other support given includes:

- projects offered support with funds and/or fundraising support include: Highfield Carnforth - new notice boards; Barley Cop Lane – support with bid development for new hedge, hedge laying and notice board; John O Gaunt – support offered towards new fencing project; Tan Hill – community consultation, fundraising; Dorrington Road – two GPA awards for hedging and bird/bat boxes.
- liaising with the Planning and Building Control Service to ensure that all allotment sites within the district are afforded protection under the Local Development Framework.
- the Recycling Forum is a developing project to support allotments (plastic re-use project).

5. YOUNG PEOPLE

In January, Cabinet considered the recommendations of the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 'Young People and Lancaster City Council' Task Group which had deliberated for nearly a year. Cabinet accepted all of the Task Group recommendations whilst recognising that some of them would be too resource intensive to implement straight away. Two of the recommendations were referred to the Local Strategic Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership. Nevertheless, a number of important recommendations were unanimously agreed by Cabinet, including:

- that the 5 outcomes of 'Every Child Matters' be included as guiding principles in the Council's policy framework
- that young people be taken account of as part of the Consultation Strategy
- that School Councils be encouraged to become involved in decision making on appropriate issues
- that regular contact be established with the Youth Council
- that there be joint working with the YMCA on youth homelessness
- that officers be encouraged to add youth content to their website pages
- that Local Democracy week be 'rejuvenated'.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities for the year 2005/06 and actions undertaken are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES	ACTION UNDERTAKEN
Community Planning	To ensure that all new documents that form part of the Local Development scheme will have undergone a sustainability appraisal that will itself have been the subject of public consultation and be robust enough to meet Government criteria	Sustainability appraisal carried out
Sustainability Partnership	To respond to the national and local concerns about the effects of climate change upon the District	Development of a climate change strategy planned for 2006/07
Diversity	To achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government	Target Date April 2007

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Work with County on services for the elderly;

Work on sustainability projects on Farmers Markets and Green Flag awards for parks;

Work on smoke free public places with the health service.

Continue efforts to mainstream equal opportunities and diversity issues.

Implement the Consultation Strategy.

Establish what the priorities for the City Council are in its role in the provision of community development and work with young people.

ACTION UNDERTAKEN

Council is one of 8 Local Authorities selected to take part in national 'AgeLink' pilot scheme.

Farmers markets now extended; Williamson Park has Green Flag status. All Council buildings now smoke free. City Council now working in partnership with the Morecambe Bay Tobacco Control Alliance.

New Equalities and Diversity Building Block of the LSP established. Strategic aims for 2006/07 identified.

Revised Strategy and Consultation Finder launched March 2006

Work completed by the Children and Young Peoples Task Group – January 2006 and endorsed by Cabinet

CONCLUSION:

All of the partnerships and the Service have clear priorities for the forthcoming year. The following gives a flavour of key work to be done

External Communication

- Continue to maximise opportunities for positive coverage, promoting Council achievement and link to Council priorities.
- Deliver an Enforcement marketing campaign and help achieve reduction in amount of litter collected
- Deliver various aspects of the Reputation project
- Through the media, and other communication channels, help drive up customer satisfaction with the Council
- Three issues per year of Your District Council Matters and to use the tri-annual BVP Survey to test satisfaction rate
- Monitor impact of recruitment advertising policy
- Through Procurement Group develop a value-for-money corporate agreement with specified number of design/print companies
- Consider a corporate approach to photography to increase value-for-money

Local Strategic Partnership

- Review and adopt a new LSP Protocol including terms of reference and membership so that the LSP is fit for purpose
- Develop a new Sustainable Community Strategy
- Co-ordination of the delivery of the LAA
- Ensuring community and voluntary sector engagement in the LSP
- Spending the LSP's Second Home Funds
- Holding conferences in June and December

Sustainability Partnership

Recycling Forum

- Commercial Waste: continuing to seek funding for a survey of local business waste, a local commercial glass recycling collection service and other local projects linking business waste as resources for local voluntary organisations.
- Plastic re-use project: An expression of interest has been submitted to LSP for funding towards this project to convert waste plastic barrels into water butts and planting tubs.
- Request Council support for promoting use of recycled materials, for example on the cycle path and signs of the Cycle Demonstration Town route.

Wildlife Forum

- Monitoring progress: Finding ways to monitor and properly report on some of the key targets from the Community Strategy and Agenda for Action such as how to report on BAP target progress in the District.
- Invasive species project: To tackle the issue of Himalayan Balsam and get community action in place to coincide with Biodiversity Day in May.
- Request Council support for 2 projects: 'Parks for People and Wildlife' – encouraging improvements to additional local parks in order to reach and maintain 'Green Flag' status, and Protection and enhancement of existing wildlife (e.g. dragonflies) and ecosystems (e.g. wetlands) at Middleton Wood. The Forum is inputting into visioning and advice on the current wildlife interest and management needed to retain it.

Food Forum

- In supporting the priority goal of reducing 'food miles' by increased access-to and procurement of local food, establish a local food task group and Action Plan. Request Council support for Local Food Procurement policy. Encouraging City Council establishments that provide food to source locally produced food where possible.

Transport

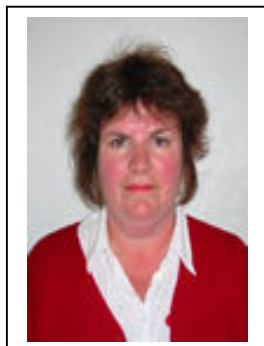
- Request Council support for: Feasibility study into major improvements to public transport in the Heysham, Morecambe, Lancaster and University corridor in supporting the priority goal of improving sustainable travel options and integration.

Energy Forum

- Promoting positive responses from the City Council to requests for local small-scale renewable energy generating projects.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JANICE HANSON, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENGINEERING AND MORECAMBE REGENERATION



2005 was a very busy and challenging year, but also very exciting, especially the M6 link application going through our planning process. It now moves to County for their approval, which is scheduled for May. We also know that Highways and Traffic teams will now work for the County Council from the end of June. This is a major challenge for City Council to make sure that our residents do not suffer as a consequence.

The commencement of Phases 6 and 7 Coastal Defence Schemes is especially important. This has been a long time coming and it is due to the sheer determination and hard work of our officers. It comes at exactly the right time and will coincide with the Masterplan work going on in the West End.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.
- Performance Review Committee (part).

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group.
- Morecambe Bay Partnership (part).
- Winning Back the West End Steering Group (part).

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

For most of 2005/06, my main areas of responsibility have been those functions delivered through Engineering Services. In particular :

- Sea and coastal defences
- Car parking and highways enforcement
- Delivery of highways work programmes as part of the Lancashire Highways Partnership

Recently, my area of responsibility was extended to include Morecambe Regeneration.

ENGINEERING SERVICE:

Achievements in 2005/06

- The biggest achievement was finally obtaining Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) approval and funding to go ahead with Morecambe Coastal Works Phases 6 and 7. Contractors are now on site to deliver this £14 million scheme over the next 18 months.
- We were also successful in securing Cycling Demonstration Town status and funding which we anticipate will help us to become the cycling centre of the North West. Our aim is to at least double the rate of cycling over the next three years.
- Two local road safety schemes have been completed (Altham Road and Fairfield Road) and consultation on a third scheme in Bowerham resulted in it not going ahead. I anticipate that two 20 mph schemes will have been completed by the end of the Highways Partnership on 30th June 2006.
- Bids for funding for two pedestrian facilities have been successful. As a result, a pedestrian refuge and carriageway narrowing has been constructed in Heysham Road, and it is expected that a pedestrian facility will be constructed in Marine Road East before 30th June.
- Residents car parking schemes have been slow to progress as each consultation exercise has resulted in a wide range of views being expressed, modifications to proposals introduced and objections to the final stage of making a Traffic Regulation Order. Seven have been worked on and the Traffic Regulation Orders for two should be determined by 30th June.
- The Car Parking Service has continued to work to a high standard, particularly in bedding in the partnership with Parkwise on parking enforcement. We have developed a draft Car Park Strategy which will be widely consulted on during April and May.
- One of the major changes to my portfolio area is the decision by the County Council to end the Highways Partnership on 30th June. This will result in the transfer of 17 highways staff to the County Council. A major challenge for 2006/07 will be how we can continue to influence transport issues through Lancashire Locals once we no longer have a direct role in service delivery.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

Future Developments for 2006/07

On 30th June 2006, our current Engineering Services will cease to exist as a result of the County Council's decision to end the Lancashire Highways Partnership (LHP). Highways staff will transfer to the County Council and, following the decision of Personnel Committee on 7th February, the car parking team will transfer to Property Services and the Coastal and Special Projects Team will move into Planning.

The Corporate Plan/Coalition Priorities 2006/07 do identify specific developments on highways and transportation issues:

- To determine how we will influence the County Council to implement a continuing programme of road safety improvements and to encourage alternatives to road travel in the light of the ending of the Lancashire Highways Partnership
- Completion of the Morecambe Coastal Works
- Improvements in information about public transport
- Determine with the County Council how to progress further residents' car parking schemes

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Engineering	<p>To improve parking provision for residents, local businesses and visitors. Implement programme of consultation and introduction of residents parking schemes.</p> <p>To manage transport more effectively so as to improve the safety of our citizens. Implement a programme of road safety improvements: 20 m.p.h. zone, safe routes to schools, etc. Implement the cycling strategy using external finance available and develop and implement a walking strategy.</p> <p>Member oversight of the Engineering Service.</p>
Morecambe Regeneration	<p>Ensure that the Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Morecambe.</p> <p>Continue to progress (in conjunction with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health as appropriate) West End Regeneration through the Masterplan, Regeneration of the Central Promenade area and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Area.</p> <p>Member oversight of the West End Partnership and Poulton Neighbourhood Management Service.</p>

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Ensure that the Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Morecambe.

Continue to progress (in conjunction with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health as appropriate) West End Regeneration through the Masterplan, Regeneration of the Central Promenade area and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Area.

Member oversight of the West End Partnership and Poulton Neighbourhood Management Service.

To improve parking provision for residents, local businesses and visitors. Implement programme of consultation and introduction of residents parking schemes.

To manage transport more effectively so as to improve the safety of our citizens. Implement a programme of road safety improvements: 20 m.p.h. zone, safe routes to schools, etc. Implement the cycling strategy using external finance available and develop and implement a walking strategy.

Member oversight of the Engineering Service.

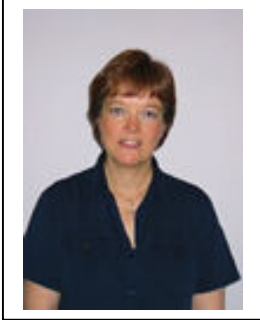
CONCLUSION:

We must ensure that the discussions we have with County regarding sustainable transport initiatives must include park and ride, intelligent transport and the possible inclusion of a bridge to Luneside.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Highways and Traffic teams for their help and support in enabling me to do my job. I wish them all well and know that our loss is County's gain.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

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



This portfolio area focuses very much on health experiences. Decent and safe housing is a basic requirement supported by safe food, water and a non-polluted environment. My report outlines some of our main achievements in 2005/06 and looks forward to developments in 2006/07.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

N/a.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

This portfolio covers the three major functional areas of Council Housing, Environmental Health and Strategic Housing. Although the Council housing stock is reducing as houses are sold through right to buy, it remains the major provider of affordable social housing in the District with just less than 4,000 dwellings (out of a total of some 58,000 dwellings across the District). Environmental Health work focuses very much on its protective role on health - related issues whilst Strategic Housing uses a variety of approaches to achieve its objective of ensuring that everyone in the District has the opportunity of a decent home.

Achievements in 2005/06

Council Housing

- Following the successful completion and signing off of our Options Appraisal, Government Office has now declared our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan as being "Fit for Purpose". This means that we have addressed all the priority areas identified in Government Guidance, and that we do not have to submit a Business Plan for scrutiny for another three years.

- Following the centralisation of the Service and amalgamation with the Repairs and Maintenance Service (RMS), there have been a number of significant service improvements to report. The establishment of a specialised arrears recovery team has been particularly effective, and this year end, rent arrears are set to be at the lowest level in eight years.
- Personnel Committee has approved the modernisation of RMS which has completely changed working practices and has made the Service far more responsive
- Tenants are now being offered fixed appointments for operatives to undertake identified repairs at their first point of contact with the Service. The average length of time taken to undertake repairs has more than halved in the past year.
- Lancashire County Council's Supporting People Team has undertaken a comprehensive service review of our sheltered housing and community alarm systems, and we have received an extremely positive report.
- We have utilised the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiries (KLOEs) to undertake a self assessment of five specific service areas. Detailed improvement plans have now been produced which should result in further improvements to service delivery.
- The one area where performance remains a concern is the average time taken to re - let properties (currently 50 days). Following the restructuring of RMS, there should be a significant improvement in this Performance Indicator and a target of 30 days has been set for next year.

Strategic Housing

- The Housing Strategy for 2005/06 - 2008/09 was approved by Council following some months of detailed research and consultation. The Strategy was heavily informed by the recent housing needs and stock condition survey and concentrates on an action plan to address 4 priority areas namely restricting low demand housing markets, affordable housing, supporting housing needs and homelessness and improving stock condition.
- Homelessness prevention work has continued to be the highest priority area for the homeless team. The determined efforts of the team in this area have resulted in a dramatic reduction in spend against the B&B budget. Our prevention strategy has been supported this year by the recruitment of an additional front line prevention worker funded through Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Efforts next year will continue to be focused around the prevention agenda and exploring "invest to save" initiatives.
- The implementation of the Housing Act 2004 represents a major piece of work particularly in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and selective licensing of other rented properties. This will see the replacement of an existing registration scheme in Morecambe with a district wide licensing scheme. The preparation and training has been undertaken this year and the licensing of approximately 800 HMO's will start when the legislation becomes effective on 1st April 2006. This will give us the opportunity to further strengthen our enforcement

approach and take robust action against those landlords who fail to provide safe houses for their tenants.

Environmental Health

- Lancaster is one of a handful of Councils nationally and the only one in Lancashire to have their food hygiene inspection reports available for the public to view on-line on the Council's website. This demonstrates our commitment to transparency, freedom of information and e-government. Our food inspection programme this year managed to achieve 95% for high risk inspections despite having one vacant post and two maternity absences. These vacancies did however affect the lower risk inspections, which failed to meet targets, but will recover early in this financial year when establishment is back to normal capacity.
- The Service launched the Smokefree Awards in November 2005 in partnership with Morecambe Bay PCT. So far 62 local businesses are signed up to this award. The proposed new legislation for a complete smoking ban in public places is expected in 2007 and the Environmental Health Service will be busy making preparations for this as it is likely Environmental Health Officers will be responsible for enforcing the ban.
- The Street Warden Scheme has continued to make significant impacts in the areas of patrol. The 'mobile' wardens introduced last year has proved successful with a multi-agency joint tasking approach ensuring shared priorities have been addressed. The challenge this year is to ensure a smooth transition from Street Wardens to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).
- Progress on producing air quality action plans following the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Lancaster has been hampered by the need for extensive air pollution monitoring, traffic surveys required and complex detailed modelling work by consultants. Although progress has been slower than anticipated, the thoroughness of the approach has been recognised by Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
- The Headstone Safety Programme has continued within existing resources in all cemeteries except Lancaster Cemetery. Due to particular specialist issues regarding the "listed" status of the Cemetery, an in - house team is to be appointed as soon as possible to deal with headstone safety in Lancaster Cemetery over a 3 - year period.
- The Service has stepped up enforcement activity for dog issues and litter/dumped rubbish this year. The table below gives the numbers of enforcement actions taken.

	Fixed Penalty Notices	Prosecutions or Prosecutions Pending	Formal Cautions
Litter/Dumped refuse	14	7	
Dog Fouling	5	2	
Dog Attacks		2	1
Dog Without ID		4	3
Dog Off Lead		6	3

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN/COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Council Housing	Continue to ensure the viability of the 30-year business plan
Strategic Housing	Continue to work with Housing Associations and other parties to reduce homelessness with a particular emphasis on reducing homelessness in young people. Seek to provide affordable housing in areas of higher house prices. Extend HMO registration to Lancaster and review private sector housing enforcement strategy when the Housing Act comes into force.
Environmental Health	Tougher approach to enforcement Cemeteries improvements Review the environmental warden scheme with a view to making it financially sustainable in the medium term and to link it closely with other agencies

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Continue to progress West End Regeneration through the Master Plan, regeneration of the Central Promenade Area; and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Area.

Focus on delivering the 30-year business plan and those improvements in service performance identified as priorities by tenants.

Continue to work with Housing Associations to provide appropriate temporary accommodation. Try to shift focus work on preventative measures.

Seek to extend HMO registration to Lancaster and review our enforcement strategy when the Bill is enacted.

CONCLUSION

Once again, I am very pleased to report that significant achievements have been made in my portfolio area against all the priority outcomes identified in the 2005/06 Corporate Plan. The development of our revised Housing Strategy is of particular importance in helping to make sure that everyone in our District has the opportunity of a decent home. Successfully integrating repairs and maintenance services with housing management has made a real difference to the lives of our tenants. They told us that they wanted faster responsive repairs and response time is now down to less than a week from nearly a month. A tremendous achievement!

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR PAT QUINTON, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING POLICY AND RURAL AFFAIRS



ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06

As you can see from the heading, Planning Policy has been added to my responsibility for Rural Affairs. As planning is a very important part of the rural agenda, particularly to do with sustainable communities and affordable housing, the two fit together very well. Work done by the Planning Service in conjunction with the Economic Team on the regeneration work in Lancaster and Morecambe remain the responsibility of Councillor Bryning and Councillor Hanson.

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 Forum
- Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group
- LGA Rural Commission
- Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

PROGRESS DURING 2005/6

PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

The last year has seen fundamental changes to the structure of the Service. The award of the Planning Delivery Grant of £575,000 received for the previous year enabled investment to be made in both new technology and staff resources. The service was able to address the problems it had and consequently improved the delivery of the Planning Service. Also modern furniture and equipment is making more efficient use of space and has revitalised the appearance of Palatine Hall. This investment has come at the right time as the Service has faced significant challenges and will continue to do so next year if it is to deliver the Council's ambitious

programme and the continuing implementation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Achievements in the past year include: -

- As part of the LDF, adoption and submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) of the Statement of Community Involvement and adoption for consultation purposes of a Core Strategy
- Successful implementation of two IT projects. The Uniform 7 Spatial project enables planning application records to be stored in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and gives the public access to view planning applications and other software enables Planning and Building Regulation applications to be submitted electronically and includes on-line payment facilities
- Performance levels of determining planning applications in the monitoring period to September 2005 were above the performance levels in BVPI 109
- Successful recruitment of additional staff, made possible and agreed by Cabinet in the light of the Planning Delivery Grant and also the award of a further significant Grant
- Recognition by Government Office North West (GONW) that Lancaster City Council is one of the top improving planning authorities in the North West Region.

These successes have been achieved through good business planning and a great amount of support from staff for performance management measures. Discussions have been held with stakeholders on some of these measures and a general consensus of support from commercial agents and other stakeholders has been achieved. Good communications need to be maintained.

The addition of new staff and the dynamics they have added to the planning teams has resulted in a reduction in workplace stress. Agents report high levels of satisfaction with contact arrangements.

Like many other Councils there are concerns about our ability to carry out satisfactorily the additional work arising from the Government's requirements for community involvement and the sustainability appraisal of the Local Development Framework documents. The delivery of major projects in accordance with these requirements will consume considerable time but the benefit of trying to find community consensus is a key goal.

Both the Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB have had money from Government to finance a Sustainable Development Fund. Organisations have been able to bid into the scheme and many projects have been funded. I have been involved in the panel for the Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB and have been encouraged by the number of applicants dealing with renewable energy sources.

PLANNING PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

The major challenges facing the Service in the next year can be summarised as follows:

- Maintaining performance on the determination of planning applications.
- Implementing the next phase of e-government investment to meet the Government's challenging e-planning agenda.
- Examining the potential for joint working with South Lakeland and Barrow on the delivery of the Building Control Services.
- Engagement in the formulation of the Regional Spatial Strategy to protect the District's interests.
- Undertaking the public consultation phase for the Core Strategy section of the Local Development Framework.
- Enabling affordable housing to be developed and, in particular, in the rural areas, achieving community consensus on this issue.
- Determining the future role of the Arnside and Silverdale AONB unit following government changes in the management of the countryside and a review of protected areas in North Lancashire and Cumbria.

The Planning and Building Control Service has moved into a mainstream position in responding to the core ambitions expressed in the Community Strategy. Continued and wise investment in the skills and resource base in the Service is key to ensuring it is fit for purpose to meet the significant challenges faced in the year ahead.

PROGRESS DURING 2005/6

RURAL AFFAIRS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Carnforth Market Towns Initiative

Final approval for the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) funding programme was received from the North West Development Agency (NWDA) in October 2005, confirming just under a million pounds of NWDA funding for Carnforth and the surrounding areas for the period to March 2008. Project application and appraisal processes are now in place and a revised annual performance plan for 2005/6 agreed with NWDA. Five projects have been worked up and submitted as funding applications:

- MTI officer and administration support - approved
- Sports facilities feasibility study (Lancaster City Council) - approved
- Community centre feasibility study (Lancashire County Council)
- Lundsfield Pathfinder, a scheme of footpath improvements (Lancashire County Council)
- Festivals and Events (Signposts) - to be resubmitted

A further project for improved tourism facilities and promotion is due for submission shortly.

Work is ongoing on the development of Lundsfield Quarry. This project links a footpath improvement scheme, new sports facility, new access across the canal and canal side improvements.

The Urban Design Study, commissioned by CARP (Carnforth and Area Regeneration Partnership) and the City Council was completed in May 2005. This included a Town Centre improvement strategy and work is underway with TDG the main HGV operator in the town to relocate; thus unlocking the wider benefits to the town centre.

The Canal Waterbus has proved a success and now has two boats in service, the Farmers Market operates at Carnforth Station each month, a Tourism Guide to the area has been produced and an events and festivals programme was held in the winter of 2004/5.

Carnforth Station and Carnforth Connect

Carnforth Station Trust continues to operate the redeveloped Station and Visitor Centre with support from Lancaster City Council. It has now become established as a successful visitor attraction and a key part of the tourism experience at Carnforth.

The Carnforth Connect service, a key transport project linked to the station, recently had funding withdrawn by Lancashire County Council. A number of agencies, including CARP have received an application from LCC to secure the service for the following two years. This has been agreed by CARP but awaits the endorsement of the NWDA.

Tourism in the Rural Areas

The new Lune Valley brochure has been launched and financial support provided for the new Glasson Dock leaflet. The City Council helps with publicity for the Wray Scarecrow Festival and also the Lunesdale Studio Trail. The range of rural walk leaflets have been advertised in the Country Walking magazine and country areas and walks promoted at the Outdoor Show of the NEC. The Tourism Service also hosted a very successful weekend visit of the Outdoor Writers. A talk, guided tours and information packs proved very popular. Managers from VisitBritain have also had a day visit.

A review of the rural Tourist Information Points at shops and post offices and a survey of the information boards has been undertaken. The City Council will, in future, be responsible for the information on all boards including those owned by the County Council.

The City Council works in partnership with the Lancaster Canal Rural Partnership to help promote the restoration of the northern reaches of the canal, with the Rural Tourism Initiative Panel of the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy group of the two AONB's.

Hornby Village Institute

The refurbishment and extension of the Institute as a Community Resource Centre is now complete. The City Council agreed capital funding of up to £40,000 in conjunction with the County and Hornby Village Trust. £12,615 was needed and a

further £25,000 has been provided to answer their cash flow problem while waiting for a grant to be paid by the Lancashire Economic Partnership. This £25,000 will be repaid to the City Council by the end of June 2006. A good example of partnership working.

Business Development Scheme

This grant aid scheme for business expansion was extended to all rural areas with effect from April 2005. Three businesses have been supported with funding totalling £7,553. An application to extend this Transitional Area funding to the end of 2006 has been submitted.

The City Council continues to make a funding contribution to the Leader+ programme.

Leeds Morecambe Community Rail Partnership

The line from Heysham to the main line near Lancaster and from Carnforth to Settle has been designated as a Community Railway by the former Strategic Rail Authority. The Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership Co has been set up, bringing together the relevant rail user groups and local authorities. The new company, currently chaired by the Principal Tourism Officer, aims to increase the profile and usage of the line, and will be officially launched on 20 May 2006 at Carnforth. With external funding, it is intended to have a part-time Community Rail Officer in place by summer 2006.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND STRATEGIC HOUSING

Air Quality

The Environmental Health Service has been monitoring air quality in Carnforth and the results show the potential to exceed the statutory limits. Officers are now working on the possible declaration of an Air Quality Management Area, which will result in an action plan to improve the air quality in the designated area.

Rural housing

The City Council has enabled a total of 15 new affordable housing units to be provided in the rural areas in the current financial year. 8 were delivered by Adactus Housing Group through grant funding from the Housing Corporation and the other 7 through private developers' contribution on new development sites. This is where the planners negotiate Section 106 Agreements at the time of a planning consent.

In the next year, it is planned that a further 18 affordable units will be available through Adactus Housing Group. Negotiations with private developers will continue as part of Section 106 Agreements.

As well as the lack of affordable housing, there is the challenge of the condition of some rural housing and the need for specialist housing for people with a disability and for older people.

Moor Platt in Caton was expected to provide extra care for older people. There have been a number of constraints on the site and the City Council has recently received an update from the County Council. The information is that the proposed scheme was not financially viable and is now on hold. We are now waiting for further progress.

LEISURE SERVICES

Leisure Services have continued to work in the rural areas. Indoor bowling groups, a rural primary school five-a-side competition and holiday activities prove to be very popular and support is given to after-school club provision. Use and income from the community pools is increasing.

For the coming year, emphasis will be put on the take-up of physical activities and sporting opportunities. It is intended to consult users of the community pools, promote a "swim for fitness" programme and tackle Disability Discrimination Act issues.

As has been reported in the Economic Development section, Leisure Services will be involved in the feasibility study for sports facilities in Carnforth.

RURAL PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

There has been some progress on rural proofing from last year but there is still much to be done. Parish Plans have been prepared by most of the larger villages in the district and it is proposed that the Planning Service could draw together the contents of these Plans. This summary should be representative of the needs of the rural areas as seen by residents and Parish Councils. This piece of work is in progress and can then be used, not only to inform the Local Development Framework on planning issues and policies, but also to provide information on other issues such as transport, safety and leisure. The development of the Carnforth Market Towns Initiative is at last progressing and Carnforth needs to be seen as a significant centre serving the surrounding rural area. The Regional debate still focuses on the urban areas and we need to continue to seek to influence regional policy to take on board rural recovery, tourism and business. A report from the Rural Commission on rural affordable housing should be available this year, which may help us provide an effective rural housing policy. The Vision Board commissioned a study which highlights three key factors that will impact on the rural areas: (a) policy changes regarding agriculture and the consequences to farming, (b) rural housing affordability and (c) the role of tourism. These need to be taken into account when we look at the economic and sustainable viability of our rural area.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA

Planning Policy

Rural Affairs generally and a number of services specifically as they affect rural areas, e.g. Planning, Housing, Economic Development, Leisure (to be added as required)

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

Oversee the Planning Service

Ensure that Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of the rural areas.

Ensure that all parts of the Local Development Scheme undergo sustainability appraisal.

Implement the Market Towns Initiative in Carnforth.

Safeguard provision of Council Housing in rural areas.

Enable provision of affordable housing in rural areas.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Ensure that Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of the rural areas.

Ensure that all parts of the Local Development Scheme undergo sustainability appraisal.

Implement the Market Towns Initiative in Carnforth.

Safeguard provision of Council Housing in rural areas.

Enable provision of affordable housing in rural areas.

Oversee the Planning Service.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

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



Being the Cabinet Member with responsibilities for Tourism, Leisure, Arts and Events, and Museums, I am often teased or taunted by fellow Councillors anxious to remind me that virtually all the activities in my portfolio are "discretionary" rather than "statutory". I have a ready reply: "Yes, my areas of work are indeed largely discretionary, but they are also absolutely vital to the health and well - being of our community". As I write this report in March 2006, all Councillors and staff are much exercised by the interim "Vision Statement". How often do we find reading the Vision Board's findings that quality of life issues massively underpin our ambitions to make our District a vibrant area in which to work, live and visit. And how often over the past year have I had cause to recollect that Tourism, Leisure, Arts, Events, and Museums play such an important role in the lives of all our residents. True, the highest priorities set by our Council do not major in on my portfolio. Nevertheless, that portfolio is certainly not immune to the Corporate Plan's demands for:

- delivering value for money and customer - focused services
- making our District a healthier place
- supporting sustainable communities, and -
- reducing crime and disorder through diversionary strategies

But lofty phrases remain simply that unless they are translated from the page into reality, and this has been achieved day after day, week after week, throughout the year by a dedicated and hard working staff. So I am pleased in this report to acknowledge the inestimable contribution made by the Council's workforce.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet.

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- British Resorts Association (now renamed "British Resorts and Destinations Association")
- English Historic Towns Forum
- Heritage Champion
- Lancashire Tourism Partnership

- Lancaster District Older Persons Partnership
- LGA Tourism Forum
- LSP North West Lancashire Lifelong Partnership Group
- Morecambe Resort Action Plan Steering Group
- Museums Advisory Panel
- Signposts Executive Committee
- Tern Project Working Group
- West End Partnership Management Committee

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

TOURISM:

In April 2005, our newly appointed Senior Tourism Marketing Officer wasted no time in undertaking a review of all marketing activity. A new marketing plan has been produced and implemented with greater emphasis on the websites.

There has been much involvement with local regeneration projects, including the Glasson Action Partnership; the Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership; the Arnsdale/Silverdale Sustainable Tourism Group; the Carnforth Market Towns Initiative. Preparations are underway in the event of the Lancaster Tourist Information Centre moving from its Castle Hill site. TIC use has continued to increase with Lancaster dealing with 116,211 enquiries in 2005 and Morecambe 146,516. An increasing proportion of enquiries, particularly in Lancaster, have been by e - mail or letter reflecting interest from overseas and the availability of the accommodation booking service.

Participation in the work of the Forest of Bowland Steering Group and the Bowland Tourism Environment Fund has continued.

Staff have represented our tourism interests on a range of national and regional bodies, including the British Resorts Association (now re - named the British Resorts and Destinations Association); the English Historic Towns Forum Tourism Group; the Tourism Management Institute, Coastal and Benchmarking Group, and on national professional bodies. Contributions have been made to regional tourism strategies for the North West.

Tourism is now part of the national Community Rail Strategy and, as a result, a Community Rail Partnership Company has been formed for the Leeds - Morecambe route. It is hoped that identified external funding will allow for a Community Rail Partnership Officer (part - time) to be appointed to undertake promotional activity.

The accommodation booking hotline has been a great success, bringing £66,300 extra business to local accommodation providers and covering its extra staffing costs.

Closer working relationships have been established with Mitchells Hotels, Lancaster House Hotel and the Holiday Inn.

Visitors and participants connected with the International Youth Games were supplied with information packs and merchandise. TIC staff also assisted with accommodation bookings.

The new Tern website was launched in Morecambe and two new books by Jon Sparks were officially launched at the Lancaster TIC.

A national conference was hosted in Lancaster of the Outdoor Writers Guild and a visit to the area by managers from Visit Britain was hosted. The District took part in two Lancashire - based familiarisation trips.

In the annual Lancashire Excellence in Tourist Awards, the district team was again nominated.

Participation in promotions - both regionally and nationally - has been a feature of the year and have included G - Mex Holiday Show; Confex; Great Days Out Fair; the Outdoor Show; and British Travel Trade Fair. Literature Exchange Workshops have been supported at Windermere and Penrith. The Lancashire Venues Show was supported at the Football Museum, Preston.

New publications for 2005/06 have included a revised Tern leaflet, a new Carnforth brochure and a Lune Valley publication. The revised Group Travel Guide was also launched. A combined A4 poster promotes Events and the TICs.

The Service is represented on several groups within the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, including Marketing; Country Escapes; Coastal Contrasts, and Conference and Group Travel Lancashire, as well as representation on the Grant Panel of LRTi (Lancashire Rural Tourism initiative).

The budget for Tourist Information Centres promotion has been reallocated from advertising to promotional features/events in order to raise the profile of the Centres. This includes flyers to promote the accommodation, a hotline number, a banner stand to use as an eye - catching backdrop at small exhibitions and an A4 poster for use by key hotels and businesses.

Help has been given to potential operators by providing start - up/promotional advice and by directing to grant funding sources. Close working with the newly - formed "Quality in Tourism" initiative will ensure that all participating operators are fully accredited.

A particular disappointment this past year has been the effect of new licensing laws on the cosy bars provided in the past by so many guest houses as a service to their guests. The massively increased cost of the new type of licence for such facilities has meant that bars in small guest houses are now a thing of the past. Despite vigorous lobbying of the Government through the former British Resorts Association, the Government remained immovable on this subject, and the consequence is that a time - honoured feature of the small English guest house is now but a memory.

Although not the direct responsibility of the Tourist Section, one of the highlights of the year was the broadcast of BBC TV's "Antiques Roadshow" which showed to advantage Lancaster's glorious historic heritage, and especially the Gillow treasures owned by our Town Hall.

While we are still awaiting the visit numbers for 2005, we are expecting the trend that has been evident over the past three years to continue. 2004 saw over 4.9 million visitors to the district, an increase on the previous year's figure of 4.7. These figures support over 4,000 jobs in the local economy.

Looking ahead into the next financial year, there are several important issues to be dealt with, including:

- producing a revised and updated Tourism Strategy that will be fully integrated with the as yet unpublished LBTB's (Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board) Destination Management Plan for Lancashire (due Spring 2006)
- produce and implement an annual Tourism Marketing Plan to be in place by June 2006
- the relocation of Lancaster TIC will require the development of a costed implementation plan accompanied by bids for external funding.

LEISURE:

Leisure facilities and programmes continue to prove popular and successful, with a throughput of over 1 million participants during 2005/06.

Children and Young People

This section of Leisure Services testifies to the increasing importance that both central and local government is placing on the Children and Young People's agenda. Indeed, the introduction by the Department of their Child Protection Policy has now been adopted as Council - wide policy and Leisure is the lead Service for corporate training on child protection matters. We are also playing a lead role on the Lancashire and Young People's Strategic Partnership and on the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board. The work of this section is aimed at improving the co-ordination and appropriateness of the Council's Services for children and young people. Key areas of work include leading on child protection issues; the children and young people Health and Well - being building blocks of the Local Strategic Partnership and the relevant multi - agency groups which feed into the building blocks. Also generally ensuring that Officers and Members are kept up to date with current and new legislation such as Every Child Matters and Youth Matters.

Leisure Development

This section plays a key role by working within the community to increase participation in sport and recreation. This involves responsibility for many projects and services, including: after school clubs; playschemes; holiday programmes (during every school holiday period); priority group work with people with disabilities; people from minority and ethnic backgrounds, and with people aged 50 plus. Other areas of work include festivals and competitions, curriculum coaching, coaching and leadership awards, community development work, outdoor education, arts and crafts, and support for local schools, clubs and groups with external funding bids.

The International Youth Games

Were held in Lancaster in the Summer of 2005 with our own local participants joined by representative from our various twin and friendship towns – Rendsberg (North Germany), Almere (Netherlands), Vaxjo (Southern Sweden), Perpignan (Southern

France), Lublin (South East Poland), Viana do Castelo (Northern Portugal), and Aalborg (Denmark). Over 500 boys and girls aged between 14 - 16 years were involved, participating in eight different competitive sports. So the logistics were formidable, to say the least. An interesting and important aspect of the Games is that competitors are placed with host families, thus giving everyone involved rich, mutual insights into the ways of different nations. Lasting friendships were made and the experience was, for most, a once in a lifetime event. This year was exceptionally challenging for Leisure Services as the organisation that had previously arranged and administered the Games was unable – at short notice – to fulfil this role. At the eleventh hour, the task was taken on by Leisure and Administration Services working in partnership with volunteers from local sports organisations. It was a great tribute to the teamwork of all concerned that the Games were such a triumph of organisation and sportsmanship. I am pleased to take this opportunity of thanking everyone involved, and especially David Owen, the Chief Officer of Leisure Services, for his very special determination and commitment.

Happy Mount Park's Aqua Park

It is impossible in a short report to do full justice to the full range of Leisure Services' activities, but one project deserves special mention and arises from the Services' responsibility for Happy Mount Park. The much - loved paddling pool there has, for several years past, been deeply unsatisfactory due to poor foundations and constantly cracking and leaking surfaces. Successive - and expensive - repairs have been to no avail. This nettle was finally grasped when the Cabinet agreed that the capital sum of £205,000 which was the product of a sale of some Council - owned land in Lancaster could be spent on bringing Happy Mount Park's ailing pool into the 21st century. The decision was taken to install a state - of - the - art Aqua Park which will be immensely attractive to children. A consultation exercise gave the Cabinet confidence that the solution was one of which an overwhelming number of pool users most strongly approved. The new facility will be fully available in May 2006.

Salt Ayre Sports Centre and Community Pools

Salt Ayre Sports Centre is one of the jewels in the Council's crown and attracts nearly 250,000 swim admissions per year. The Council's strong commitment to this sports centre is amply illustrated by the significant refurbishment that took place in the late autumn of 2005. But we are equally devoted to our three smaller community pools at Heysham, Carnforth and Hornby. Swimming as a pastime ranks very highly in the popularity surveys of children and young people. Not only is it an enjoyable activity but it can also be a life - saver. I very much hope that future administrations will share our present determination to ensure that these three pools continue to thrive. Meanwhile, the review of swimming undertaken throughout the district has resulted in a 40% increase in participation in swimming lesson programmes.

Looking ahead, the most exciting challenge for the immediate future will be to oversee the restructuring of two former Services into one coherent new Service, taking advantages of the many strategic and tactical synergies this will provide. The new Cultural Services will effectively combine the former Leisure Service and the former Arts and Events Service.

Community

The Service has taken on responsibility for community development work on the Ridge and Newton estates, and establishing a partnership with the Marsh Community Centre.

Arts and Events

The Arts and Events Service is responsible for co-ordinating and delivering a comprehensive all year round festivals and events programme across the District, increasing access to the arts, and providing specialist advice on funding and issues related to the arts. The Service also directly manages two venues - the Platform and the Dome, and provides an extensive range of interpretive activities and guided walks.

In the year under review, several large crowd - pulling events were again organised, including the Fireworks Spectacular and the Morecambe Heritage Gala with the amazing Red Arrows aerial displays. The four - day Easter Maritime Festival has now been in existence for eighteen consecutive years. The affection in which it is held was impressively demonstrated by the strong public reaction to the announcement that the 2005 Festival would be the last due to funding difficulties. However, private sponsorships were forthcoming and it was agreed that the Council would continue to provide the necessary staffing for the 2006 event, even though the revenue funding was much reduced. We will continue the strategic funding shift from being a direct provider of Events and Festivals to playing a more cost effective role as commissioner and enabler.

An important development has been the introduction of a new Festivals Innovation Fund whereby external organisations - rather than the Council's direct involvement - would be encouraged to bid for grants for 2006. The result has been very encouraging with a pleasing combination of tried and tested favourites continuing (such as the Kite Festival) buttressed by new Festivals and Events that have the very real prospect of developing into major events. The judgments will be a feature of next year's Annual Report. Suffice to say now that the early signs are hopeful and encouraging.

The Dome and the Platform have become such an essential part of Morecambe's events and happenings programme that it is tempting to take them for granted - but that would be a serious mistake. Dedicated staff work often unsocial hours to keep the programmes infinitely varied with always every year a good sprinkling of surprise events as well as firmly established favourites. Similarly, the Lunchtime Concerts in St John's Church, Lancaster, have been successfully organised for so many years that they have become an established fixture of the City's music scene. A great deal of work and imagination is needed each year to ensure that they continue to thrive, as do the District - wide guided walks.

Whatever the future holds for the new combined Cultural Service, one thing is certain. The work we associate most strongly with Arts and Events will be characterised by partnership working and a continuation of the close working with organisations such as the Dukes, Ludus, More Music in Morecambe, Folly and LitFest.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities - they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Arts and Events	To see Phase 1 of the Morecambe Action Plan completed.
Leisure	
Museums	
Tourism	

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Use the Community Festivals Fund and the Festivals Innovation Fund to promote new festivals.

Continue efforts to improve the financial performance of the main leisure and sporting facilities. Integrate our leisure and sporting provision.

CONCLUSIONS:

I began with a reference to the interim pronouncements of the Vision Board and on this I will also conclude as it seems to me to be all important and all - embracing. It is particularly pleasing to see with what enthusiasm the Board has taken up the "City, Coast and Countryside" mantra. This idea actually has its origins in the Tourism Service of sixteen years ago. It provides an ideal banner under which our District can march forward in all its variety and contrasts and yet still be a District that conforms to a coherent strategy fairly and equally serving an historic county town, a regenerating seaside resort and a rural hinterland with exceptional possibilities. I hope the whole Cabinet will be able to unite behind this nascent vision for a unified District.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR ALEX STONE CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTRATION, INFORMATION, PROPERTY AND REVENUES SERVICES



Council services have continued to improve this year. With continued investment in our Benefit Services good progress has been made delivering a service the community can be proud of. Our investment in E-government and IT initiatives continues to deliver real improvements in how we deliver local government services. Both our Property Services and Administration Services have continued to provide excellent support for Members, staff and the public during a busy election year, significant legislative change and important civic events.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Grants Committee
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Performance Review Committee (part)

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES Etc:

None.

MEMBERSHIP OF PARTNERSHIPS:

None.

CABINET LIAISON GROUPS:

- Chair - E-Government Cabinet Advisory Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

ADMINISTRATION SERVICES & CIVIC AND CEREMONIAL AFFAIRS:

The major event for the Service this municipal year was the administration of the County Council and Parliamentary Elections. As expected the take-up of postal voting has dramatically increased in line with the national trend and this, together with the steady march of new legislation, has continued to provide a significant challenge to the management of elections.

The District has no scheduled elections this year, which will allow the opportunity to take stock of further new legislation due this year in preparation for the District Elections in 2007.

With a vacant Elections Officer post during the crucial canvass time in the autumn, telephone registration was continued successfully but the intended extension to Internet registration was not pursued. This will hopefully be introduced this year.

More legislation on how the canvass can be conducted is due out this year providing a further challenge to the Elections staff.

July 2005 saw Lancaster hosting the International Youth Games. This developed into a wider role for Administration Services beyond the usual 'civic' remit rather suddenly when the organisational arrangements were changed with just a few weeks to go. All staff, together with those in Leisure Services, responded and, despite a few teething problems, the event proved successful.

Work is continuing to improve the traditional civic programme, with the assistance now of an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group and progress is being made on a Civic Web page to 'market' the Mayoralty.

The greatest challenge to the Democratic Support team this year has been the organisation of the new Licensing Act Panels to support the work of the legal team in the implementation of the new licensing legislation. Action was taken quickly at the beginning of September to cancel non-essential meetings and ward off the looming crisis for both the staff and Members involved in the process.

Work has also continued on reviewing of the operation of full Council, which will hopefully result in some changes by the time this report is published.

Also moving ahead has been the continued progress with the use of technology in committee management. Almost all Councillors are now using computers to access committee documents and other information to a greater or lesser degree and the consolidation of this process and support to Members in using the system will continue to be a major objective of the Service. Support has recently been provided to the Training and Development Officer to undertake one to one interviews with Members and the results of these sessions should provide better focused training and development both for existing Members and in planning for any new Councillors in 2007.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI), which was implemented on 1st January 2005, has bedded in over the past year and work has continued on all aspects of information management to improve the Council's systems in this respect. A total of 124 FOI requests were received during 2005 all of which were responded to within the statutory deadline.

New Service Level Agreements were agreed for non-Housing voluntary organisations this year. However, it was acknowledged that some improvements could be made in the future, particularly in the monitoring of these grants, and a full review of how these are managed is being undertaken to produce a report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and I look forward to their recommendations on this.

INFORMATION SERVICES - E-GOVERNMENT:

The Council has reached the statutory deadline of 2005 for 100% of all Council Services to become e-enabled and has successfully submitted a 5th Implementing Electronic Government statement. During this municipal year, Information Services have played a valuable role co-ordinating, planning and implementing IT systems for the benefit of the Council as a whole. In particular, Information Services should be congratulated in achieving significant savings to the Council's Revenue Budget in this year's 'Star Chamber' exercise whilst continuing to deliver on its key projects.

In this municipal year, I have expanded the e-Government Cabinet Liaison Group (e-Gov CLG) to help further develop the Councils IT strategy and help the Council meet its objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan. The Group consists of the Cabinet Member responsible for e-Government (myself), Corporate Director (Central Services), Head of Information Services and representatives of each political party, and is concerned with the development and subsequent review of IEG projects and other projects which have an 'e' element such as Corporate Electronic Document Management Systems. The e-Gov CLG also actively seeks additional funding opportunities for the Council in order to further improve its IT services and also act as an enabling authority for other community bodies in their efforts to gain funding for projects, such as Rural Broadband.

Lancaster City Council's approach to implementing e-Government has been welcomed by the Audit Commission in their September 2005 report 'Customer Access and Focus' - specifically the report noted 'the Council used ICT effectively and appropriately to support access to services; its website is of good quality and easy to navigate'.

In 2005/6 Information Services:

- Successfully completed the fourth and final year of the Implementing Electronic Government programme, which has resulted in a total of £900,000 capital support from the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), which has significantly assisted the Council to deliver IT systems that will help the Council to modernise its service provision.
- Completed the E Innovations project, which had an additional £50,000 award from central government to pursue initiatives in e-learning, which will benefit the authority and our employees. In partnership with Lancaster University, the e-Gov CLG and Human Resources and Organisational Development, the authority is one of seven in the North West to obtain funding from the Government, which is committing £6 million nationwide towards high-tech local authority initiatives. The successful project known as the 'Learning Ladder' will deliver a series of guided e-learning modules, covering key staff development issues such as induction, customer service and health and safety.
- Led the Customer Services project – this project has completely changed the way that a number of street scene services are delivered by providing dedicated staff, who deal with telephone queries and record service requests in a specialised system which then passes service requests to City Contract Services (CCS). This has improved the number of phone calls to waste and cleansing which are answered, reduced repeat calls and enabled CCS staff to have access to operational information so that they can plan workloads and schedules. The information gathered from the new system will also enable the Council to completely change and modernise its bulky waste collection service, leading to a public-public partnership with the not-for-profit Furniture Matters which will see the amount of waste reused and recycled increase substantially.
- Have continued to upgrade the Council's infrastructure including upgrades of the network to allow fast access to information for anywhere within the Council's buildings, investment in advanced storage and recovery systems, mobile equipment such as handheld computers, so that email can be

accessed by mobile workers etc. All desktop computers are now less than four years old, providing our staff with computers that are fit for purpose. The redundant equipment is set to be recycled for community use by a not-for-profit organisation.

- Have completed the roll-out of computer technology to Council members as part of the Democratic Modernisation project, with the aim of making Councillors' communication with constituents, officers and colleagues more effective. So far, equipment has been delivered to 53 Councillors out of the 60 with some choosing to use their own equipment to access the Council's network. Following a successful implementation of Administration Services' Committee - Management system, Councillors and citizens can access Council documents online or via the web, to obtain electronic copies of Council Agendas, Minutes, etc.
- Have helped to enable payments for Council Tax etc. via Post Offices, automated telephone systems and the website, thus enabling substantial efficiencies by closing the Cash Offices.
- Channelled IEG funding to support two rural initiatives based in Caton and Wray, which aim to make access to electronic services available to all groups in the rural areas.
- Completed the basic data for the Local Land and Property Gazetteer, which updates the National Land and Property Gazetteer daily. This information underpins much of the Council's activity, such as Customer Services, and also underpins our geographic information systems, such as planning, parks and leisure information.
- Redesigned the Council's website to make it easier to find information, report problems etc. The new site also meets the new national guidelines and accessibility criteria. Usage of the website continues to grow strongly – around 26% over the last twelve months.
- Worked with all the other authorities in Lancashire to develop the Lancashire Portal – the Hotspot – this new portal is a means of engaging and empowering local communities. A range of toolkits enable citizens, community and voluntary groups to create their own websites, run on-line shops, create stationery and have email addresses without any payments. Others may just use the portal for up-to-date information about all aspects of life across Lancashire.
- Worked with 34 other Local Authorities to develop a national standard for E Service Delivery.
- Joined the Local Directgov Programme, which aims at simplifying customers access to all government services - both local and central.

PROPERTY SERVICES:

Throughout the year Property Services have worked with Council and Cabinet to provide information with which to consider the accommodation aspects of the Access to Services Review. The production of the options during the course of the year was in itself an achievement, requiring a significant amount of officer time. With the

completion and adoption of the Corporate Property Strategy this year, the Council now has a framework in place for the future management of the Council's property portfolio. This should prove particularly useful in regard to the Council's plan to consult publicly on the future of the Town Halls and on access to services.

With the help of the Carbon Trust, Property Services have also been working on the development and adoption of an Energy and Water Strategy for non-housing property. I am hopeful that this work will generate real energy efficiency savings for the Council in all its public buildings, the three most significant being Salt Ayre leisure centre and Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls.

This year, there have also been improvements at each of Council operated markets. Lancaster Market lettings are improving, the Festival Market remains full whilst there have been substantial increases in traders on the Charter Market.

Behind the scenes, Property Services have put a lot of work into producing the Development Agreement for the Central Promenade Development Scheme, which has provided a basis for future development to take place following the architectural competition. Also, the Service has been heavily involved with negotiations regarding the Development Agreement for the Canal Corridor scheme, coupled with the works being undertaken on the masterplan process, which is making substantial progress.

During the year, the Council's income from its property management has increased. All schemes identified for works to buildings on maintenance/health and safety have been undertaken and support has been maintained for Council Services undertaking schemes with a property aspect e.g. Luneside East, 4/5 Dalton Square and the revaluation of the Council's Housing stock. This has involved a huge amount of work from all staff within the Service who have again undertaken their duties in an efficient and effective manner.

In the year ahead Property Services will seek to:

- Progress the action plans, which have arisen from the Corporate Property Strategy and Energy and Water Strategy.
- Build on the improvements made with Lancaster Market, looking to achieve full letting if possible.
- Help to progress the Central Promenade scheme from architectural concept to a scheme capable of development that will produce a return for the Council from its land input.
- Make similar progress with Centros Miller in terms of the Canal Corridor scheme to the extent that the development agreement is completed and planning permission for a scheme is submitted.
- Progress the relevant options for accommodation, following full public consultation and a decision from Council on the future use of its public buildings and access to services.
- Successfully integrate the car parking and property functions into a single Service, following the review of Service Heads by the Chief Executive.

- Prepare a fully-funded maintenance programme following completion of the condition surveys.
- Undertake all other property functions in terms of the non-housing portfolio so that income is maintained and increased where possible, identified property is sold, where appropriate, to assist funding the capital programme, and that maintenance programmes are undertaken with the limited funding currently available.

REVENUES & BENEFITS:

I am happy to report that through Council's continued investment in the Revenues & Benefits Service we are now achieving top quartile performance for all key Benefits Performance Indicators. Confidence within the Service is high that this level of performance can continue to be maintained. A recent self-assessment against the Department for Work and Pensions Performance Standards has resulted in an overall rating of excellent in which nearly 94% of these performance standards were met.

The Service deserves to be congratulated for these excellent results, which would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of staff members. It has also earned them national recognition, with Revenues & Benefits receiving a national award for improvement in the take-up of direct debit for Council Tax payments and in achieving a Charter Mark for customer service excellence.

2005/6 has also seen the launch of the Council's Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit Take-Up Strategy. This Strategy consolidates existing good practice and enables a continuing focus on encouraging the take-up of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit from all sectors of the community now and throughout the coming years.

Solid progress has been made against e-Government priority outcomes for the Service including the electronic payment of Housing Benefit to Landlords, an on-line benefits calculator and the ability to download a benefits claim form and Council Tax discount forms from the Council's website.

There has also been improvement in "in-year" and "arrears from previous years" collection rates of Council Tax. This has been partly achieved by an increase in the number of cases where attachments of benefit and earnings have been made.

Over the next municipal year the Revenues & Benefits Service will work to maximise entitlement to Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit for those entitled to receive it and continue to improve the take-up of automated payment methods for Council Tax and Business Rates. The Service is also working towards the electronic payment of Housing Benefit to all claimants renting from the private sector.

Challenges for the Service over the next year include making sure that the integration of existing customer service into the Council's Customer Contact Centre does not result in any deterioration in the existing levels of customer service provided, particularly when so much has already been achieved. Revenues & Benefits will also work to continue to improve its customer satisfaction rating as measured by the Benefits Best Value Performance Indicator. It will continue to seek improvements in its performance and service delivery where possible and continue to work towards

achieving full compliance with performance standards as set out by the Department for Work and Pensions.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Information Services	To use new technology to maximise access to our services by all our customers
Revenues	To provide a modern customer focused Benefits Service that aspires to meet the standards set by the Government and our customers
Property	
Administration	

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Develop Customer Contact Centres in both Morecambe and Lancaster. There will be a radical look at our buildings to make them both more efficient and more accessible to all our citizens. The standards of service that customers can expect will be published and the complaints system will be revised.

Maintain and consolidate the improvements in the Benefits Service

Encourage the provision of broadband throughout the district and help disseminate good practice in rural areas

CONCLUSION:

Each Service under my Cabinet Responsibility has worked hard to deliver the Council's and Cabinet's Priorities this year. Through the Council's continued investment in the Revenues and Benefits Service, we now offer our community top-quartile local services they can be proud of. Our investment in e-government has continued to help the Council deliver local government services more efficiently, which has certainly played a part in the successful launch of our Customer Contact Centre and hopefully further enhances the Council's reputation for delivering good quality local services.

In this busy year our Administration Services have worked outstandingly to make sure national and local elections were properly conducted, successfully hosted the International Youth Games in the district and worked proactively to challenging legislative changes, including the new Licensing Act, which was a significant added burden.

Additionally this year, Property Services have continued to play a part in the successful regeneration of our area and in the review of our own Council buildings and access to services. Much work has also been done to enhance our local markets and in developing strategies that should see our Council buildings becoming increasingly more energy efficient and sustainable.