



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Executive Annual Report 2008/09

April 2009

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Introduction

Executive Member accountability is a key part of the Cabinet system. Lancaster City Council takes this very seriously and has a number of mechanisms to hold the Executive to account. As well as the procedures involving the Overview and Scrutiny Committee such as pre-scrutiny of decisions and call-in, Cabinet members answer both written and oral questions in Council and the Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet presents a report to each full Council, on behalf of Cabinet, as well as answering oral questions in Council from non-executive members on the report.

Each Cabinet Member has one or more areas of special responsibility and the following reports show the progress and achievement of goals in each of these individual portfolio areas.

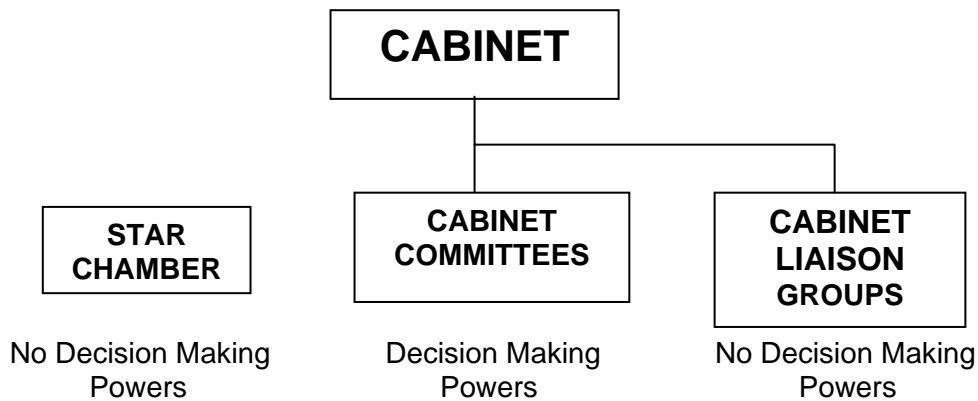
Decision Making Arrangements

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
Abbot Bryning	Leader Relationships with other Councils Finance Transport – including Parking Policy
Evelyn Archer	Property Services Joint Economic Environment Portfolio – Employment Opportunities and Regeneration in Morecambe and Lunesdale Constituency Neighbourhood Management in this District
Shirley Burns	Tourism and Events throughout the District
Jon Barry	City Council (Direct) Services – including environmental enforcement
Eileen Blamire	Community Safety Emergency Planning Strategic Planning and planning enforcement Cycling Demonstration Town
Roger Mace	Joint Economic Environment Portfolio – Employment Opportunities and Regeneration in the Lancaster part of Lancaster & Wyre Constituency Community Planning
John Gilbert	Information Technology and Customer Services Revenues and Benefits Homelessness Democratic, Legal and Licensing Services Community Engagement and Consultation
Susie Charles	Rural area Portfolio Performance Management Efficiency
David Kerr	Housing strategy and provision – excluding homelessness Environmental Health Human Resources Support for the Voluntary Sector
Jane Fletcher	Arts, Museums, Leisure, Sport and Young People

The following Cabinet structure was adopted by the City Council for dealing with matters within its delegated powers: -



CABINET COMMITTEES

Where the Cabinet is responsible for an Executive function, they may, with the exception of Key Decisions, collectively delegate further to an individual Cabinet Member, a Committee of Cabinet, an Area Committee, joint arrangements or an Officer, unless the Council directs otherwise.

Unless the Cabinet directs otherwise, a Committee of the Cabinet to whom functions have been delegated by the Cabinet may delegate further to an Officer.

Even where Executive functions have been delegated the fact does not prevent the discharge of these delegated functions by the Cabinet or Committee of the Cabinet who delegated, if appropriate.

There is only one Cabinet Committee at present and this is the Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee. The terms of reference for this Committee are to consider strategic issues regarding all Markets by the City Council, in particular issues raised as part of the Best Value Review of Assets and Facilities Action Plan.

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 1st May 2008 until 31st April 2009 166 Executive Decisions have been taken. Of these 67 were Key Decisions. 4 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)
Roger Mace	18	25	3	3
Evelyn Archer	17	6	3	1
Shirley Burns	1	5	0	1
Jon Barry	5	2	0	1
Eileen Blamire	1	2	4	0
Abbott Bryning	8	7	2	2
John Gilbert	6	3	8	1
Tony Johnson	0	2	0	0
Susie Charles	0	3	3	1
David Kerr	16	1	8	1
Jane Fletcher	7	4	1	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 – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR ABBOTT BRYNING, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (from 4th February 2009) AND CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNCILS**
- **FINANCE**
- **TRANSPORT INCLUDING PARKING POLICY**

From 19th May 2008-4th February 2009 Councillor Abbott Bryning's responsibilities were:

CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- **JOINT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO – EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND REGENERATION IN THE LANCASTER PART OF LANCASTER AND WYRE CONSTITUENCY**



1 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group

From 4th February 2009

- Cabinet (Chairman)
- Morecambe Retail, Tourism and Commercial Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee (Chairman)

2 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Management Group
- Historic Towns Forum (formerly English Historic Towns Forum)
- Lancashire Economic Partnership Forum
- Lancaster Regeneration Partnership
- LSP Economy Thematic Group
- LSP Education, Skills and Opportunities Thematic Group
- North and West Lancs Priority 1 Action Plan Partnership Board
- Storey Centre for Creative Industries

3 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Until 4 th February 2009	From 4 th February 2009
Joint Economic Environment Portfolio – Employment Opportunities and Regeneration in the Lancaster part of Lancaster and Wyre Constituency	Relationships with other Councils Finance Transport – including Parking Policy

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

19 th May 2008 – 4 th February 2009	From 4 th February 2009
<p>Improve economic prosperity throughout the Lancaster District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deliver a district wide sustainable regeneration programme based on the economic vision and strategy.</i> • <i>Launch revised business development grant scheme for 12 months and work with Storey CIC to provide targeted support to creative industries.</i> 	<p>Keep the City Council element of Council Tax increase to acceptable levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Keep annual Council Tax increases to a minimum in 2009/10 and 2010/11</i>

4 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9

Lancaster Regeneration

Lancaster & Morecambe Vision

The City Council has continued to support the work of Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Board throughout the past year, and the Vision has provided the basis for development of a new strategic economic framework. There has also been an important review of the Vision Board's role and clarification of future roles. In essence, the Vision Board have agreed that they wish to continue to operate but to focus on "blue sky" thinking and exploratory work. This can complement the work of the LDLSP, City Council, and other key partners who will focus on delivery of the agreed economic framework and action plan.

Lancaster & Morecambe Economic Development Zone

December 2008 was an important milestone in the Council's regeneration activity. It marked the completion of the Lancaster & Morecambe Economic Development Zone regeneration programme, which has successfully drawn in almost £8 million of European funding for major regeneration projects. This is the largest single regeneration programme ever handled by the City Council, and it has been a significant achievement in itself that the Council has succeeded in drawing down and

managing almost the full amount of EU funding despite some difficult and challenging circumstances.

Projects supported under the EDZ included:

- City Lab
- Luneside East
- Storey Institute
- Port of Heysham Industrial Park
- Heysham Industrial Estate access improvements
- Important elements of the cycle and walking network which have in turn helped secure Cycle Demonstration Town designation.

It is pleasing to see that City Lab has continued to prove popular as a home for rapidly expanding local ICT businesses, and over the past year has achieved an 80% occupancy level, accommodating 10 businesses who between them have created or safeguarded 76 jobs.

Luneside East

Luneside East regeneration was the lead project initiative as part of the EDZ. This is a massively challenging long term project to transform a swathe of derelict, vacant and underused former industrial land into a vibrant new mixed use neighbourhood. The Council has worked on this over several years, supported by its funding partners, and early in 2008 it completed the first public sector stage involving the complex land assembly (including compulsory purchase) and removal of the gasholder. Since then though the project has been stalled because the credit crunch has removed the ability of the Council's developer (CTP Ltd / Development Securities plc) to proceed as planned.

This developer is ready to proceed, it has prepared for the major site remediation (clearance and clean up works) needed and has secured a planning permission for a large first phase of development. The obstacles now are the facts that banks are not lending for ventures such as this and almost all house builders have cut down their activities meaning the developer can't find a house builder to contract with. To get the project moving again the Council has decided to submit a further funding application to the NorthWest Development Agency (NWDA) for a grant to undertake the remediation works. If these can be undertaken and perhaps completed next year the development opportunity here should be very much more attractive to house builders and the developer should be able to commence construction. The developer is working closely with the Council on all this. In March Cabinet resolved that the Council should undertake the remediation works itself if this proves necessary

Storey Institute

The capital construction project to restore the Storey Institute as a centre for creative industries is also now completed, and the building has been handed over to an independent, not for profit company, Storey CIC, to operate.

The completed building provides a mixture of commercial business floorspace for creative industries, new and improved galleries including a purpose designed auditorium for use by Lancaster Litfest and conferences, a bar and restaurant, and a new home for the Lancaster Tourist Information Centre.

The capital construction project has been complex and very challenging, working to a very tight budget, and I am pleased to be able to say that it has been completed exactly on its target cost. This has been despite a number of unforeseen problems which arose during the building works. This is the first major capital project that the Council has implemented using its new project management approach, LAMP, and this has undoubtedly contributed to the successful completion of the project, together with the benefits of using a modern “partnering” construction contract. The involvement of members of Storey CIC board on the project board has also been very beneficial.

Storey CIC have taken occupation of the Storey Institute under a 30 year full repairing lease. The Council has agreed to provide some revenue support for the initial two years operation of the new centre, and it needs to be noted that the current economic climate will make it more challenging for the project to break even than was originally envisaged.

Lancaster Science Park

Lancaster Science Park remains a high strategic priority for not just the City Council but also the Vision Board, LSP, Lancaster University, and Northwest Development Agency

The City Council's economic development service is leading on this project, and over recent months has been working towards submission of a new outline planning application for the Science Park. This is a critical next step in terms of completing the acquisition of the site and also in preparing the way for recruitment of a private sector development partner.

The most significant problem to overcome has been highways issues associated with peak hour queues between Galgate and the motorway junction. Specialist highways consultants have been appointed to address this issue and agree appropriate solutions with County Highways and Highways Agency.

Public consultation over the science park plans took place in early March, and it is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted on 13th April 2009.

Support for Local Businesses

Business Development Grant Scheme

The Council's Economic Development Service has been providing direct financial assistance to support new jobs in small local businesses over many years, drawing external funding from European and UK sources. Changes in external funding saw the end of the main scheme in December 2008. The final outcome of the scheme was that, since 2000, it has supported 58 businesses, the creation of 244 new jobs and the safeguarding of 60 jobs. Total expenditure on the Scheme, excluding staff time and marketing, was £231,000 of which City Council funding amounted to £49,000 (21% of the total). As noted in the Q2 PRT, the ERDF funded element of the Scheme had already exceeded its output targets on jobs created (123) and safeguarded (34) and on increased sales and safeguarded sales.

New Rent Grant Scheme

In November 2007, Cabinet approved a new, smaller scale grant scheme to replace the BDS scheme, using the Council's own resources. The new Rent Grant scheme

was launched in July 2008 and has proved very effective. It has offered grants totalling £21,255 to 13 businesses with the potential to safeguard 35 jobs and create 29 new jobs. The scheme has also been able to attract some limited additional funds through the Lancashire Local Area Agreement.

Regrettably, in view of the Council's budgetary situation it has not been possible to continue to fund the scheme in 2009/10 through the Council's own resources. Efforts are however being made to secure funds through the LSP and the outcome of a bid is currently awaited.

New Business Start-Up Support

Cabinet approved proposals in January for a new partnership arrangement between the City Council and Lancashire County Council for delivery of NWDA's Business Start Up Service from April 2009. The Service provides business advice and counselling (i.e. non-financial support) to start up and early stage businesses and will be enhanced by a £50,000 contribution from the County which will be used to increase the number of businesses that can receive advice through this service and also to help target disadvantaged groups.

Impact of Credit Crunch – Joint Response with County Council

The Council's economic development service has been working in partnership with Lancashire County Council to help ensure that individuals and businesses affected by the current economic downturn are able to get access to appropriate sources of advice and information. As part of this initiative, guidance notes have been issued to staff at both the City and County Councils customer contact centres, which will help them identify issues that may be related to the economic downturn and to make referrals to the appropriate advice agencies.

Finance

The last year has proved a very difficult, challenging year for Financial Services, and for the Council's finances generally. The £6M of investments tied up with the collapse of the Icelandic banking sector, represents a very real low point. This, coupled with the ongoing turmoil affecting the global financial markets and the economic recession, as well as more local issues such as concessionary travel take-up, has resulted in the Council experiencing the toughest financial conditions for several years – giving rise to one of the most difficult budget setting rounds that many people remember. That said, the Council has managed these pressures and achieved its target of setting a basic Council Tax increase of no more than 4%. It has also kept this target for future years, and has updated its various financial strategies to respond to the increasing pressures it faces for activities such as treasury management, capital investment and for providing funding for the provision of day to day services generally. It has also retained its overall Use of Resources score at Level 3 – that is “consistently above minimum requirements – performing well”. The next challenge will be to maintain this level of performance, whilst still achieving the future targets for Council Tax and – just as important – managing the public and other stakeholders' expectations for service standards and delivery.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR EVELYN ARCHER, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- PROPERTY SERVICES
- JOINT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO
- EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND REGENERATION IN MORECAMBE AND LUNESDALE CONSTITUENCY

From 4th February the following was added to Councillor Archer's portfolio:

- NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT IN THE DISTRICT



1 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Festivals and Events Cabinet Liaison Group
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group
- Neighbourhood Management Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group

2 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group
- LSP Economy Thematic Group
- LSP Education, Skills and Opportunities Thematic Group
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Winning Back the West End Steering Group
- LGA Rural Commission

3 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

Property Services

Joint Economic Environment Portfolio – Employment Opportunities and Regeneration in Morecambe and Lunesdale Constituency

From 4th February the following was added to Councillor Archer's portfolio:-

Neighbourhood Management in the District

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Improve economic prosperity throughout the Lancaster District:

- *Implement Phase 2 of the Morecambe Townscape Heritage Scheme*

From 4th February the following priorities/outcomes were added to Councillor Archer's portfolio:-

- *Morecambe Bay Regional Park.*

Local Communities have more influence and involvement in the way services are delivered:

- *Develop Neighbourhood Management arrangements for the district.*

4 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9

Morecambe Regeneration

The adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy confirms that Morecambe remains as a priority location for regeneration schemes and new investments when the upturn in the economy arrives.

- 2008/09 has seen the City Council, with funding from the NWDA, clear the harbour band arena site and landscape the area which will be completed by the end of March. This along with the completion of the Hovercraft lifeboat station in June will see a greatly improved setting for the Midland Hotel.
- There is a current funding bid in place for a second Townscape Heritage Initiative and the City Council is eagerly awaiting the Heritage Lottery Funds decision.
- A review of the West End Master plan is being carried out and before going to Cabinet the Board of the West End Partnership will be given the opportunity to comment.
- During the past year the City Council has been giving support to the Winter Gardens Preservation Trust in its efforts to secure funds for the restoration of this key building. Officer support was provided to help the Trust secure an initial Heritage Lottery Project Planning Grant, and the Council has agreed to act as accountable body for a £300,000 grant contribution from the Northwest Development Agency to assist with the preparation of bids for capital funding. Cabinet also agreed to support the Winter Gardens project as a candidate for a £4 million bid to the "Sea Change" seaside resort regeneration funding scheme, and further officer support is being given to the preparation of this bid.
- We will take a leading role in the formation of a Morecambe Bay Regional Park which will, among other things coordinate all the main regeneration projects around the Bay, and demonstrate that the neighbouring local authorities can work together in a sub regional partnership. It is hoped that through this programme Morecambe could be the chosen location for a Regional Park interpretation centre.

Changing policy

The past year has seen some important developments in terms of the local, national and regional policy framework for economic regeneration.

At national level we have seen the publication of the government's "Sub National Review" (SNR) of economic development. The important element of this is the move to bring together a single regional strategy for planning, economic development, and housing by 2010, officers and members have been working with other Lancashire councils and Lancashire Economic Partnership in preparation for this.

Another element of the SNR is the recommendation that Regional Development Agencies should take action towards greater delegation of funding down to local authorities.

Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership

At local level, there has been a full review of the Sustainable Community Strategy by the LDLSP and the establishment of new LSP structures, including the formation of the Economy Thematic Group to take forward the relevant elements of the Community Strategy.

City Council members and officers have been working closely with the Thematic Group to review the economic vision and to translate it into an economic action plan that can be adopted by the LSP and its partners.

It was approved by Cabinet in October 2008 that the new framework for the Economic Vision, which is based on the LDLSP Action Plan, is based around five area themes:

- Reinvention of Morecambe
- Lancaster City and Riverside
- Lancaster Science Park and the Knowledge Economy
- The Heysham/M6 Employment Corridor
- Carnforth and the rural areas

The development of this local strategy, in conjunction with the proposals of the Sub National Review referred to earlier, means that there is now an important opportunity for this district to negotiate with Northwest Regional Development Agency for the establishment of a delegated regeneration programme. This would provide a greater certainty and commitment of funding from the NWDA over a number of years, and would also allow funding to be steered more closely towards locally agreed priorities.

Officers are now working on a detailed proposal to NWDA and to the new Homes and Communities Agency which seeks to develop this approach.

Whilst the formation of the LSP has been successful, and the adoption of the Regeneration Programme for the District by the Economic Thematic group has progressed, concern remains that there is no direct representation on the Economy group from the City Councils Regeneration portfolio holder for Morecambe, despite the fact that 3 of the 5 major projects lie with the remit of this portfolio. Further work will be required regarding this representation over the next few months.

Property Services

- Backlog repairs: the condition of the Council's building stock is a major concern. Despite a backlog repairs survey having been completed in 2005, with a five year repairs programme having been compiled, and whilst some funding has been made available, the lack of the major funds required has meant that only minimal works have been undertaken. The delays will inevitably mean that the buildings will be deteriorating further with the cost increase that this will bring about.
- Cabinet has considered the difficulties being experienced at Lancaster Market and asked for further information to determine future direction. This will continue to be an issue during 2009/10. Conversely, the Charter Market and Festival Markets have been particularly successful and are a draw for shoppers in Lancaster and Morecambe.
- The current economic climate is having a significant effect on the property market. Capital receipts have proved difficult to achieve during the past year and this has become a problem for funding the capital programme. Cabinet has considered the position on the capital receipts schedule and acknowledged that in many cases offers for surplus property are not being received or that the offers are too low to consider disposals at the present time.
- Work has however continued on major schemes such as the Lancaster's Canal Corridor where the call-in process is crucial to determining the future of the scheme. However, the scheme to develop new stadium facilities for Morecambe Football Club has resulted in a capital receipt and will in future add considerably to the provision of sports facilities in the district.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR SHIRLEY BURNS, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR TOURISM AND EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT



1 INTRODUCTION

I have enjoyed my year on the Cabinet and I would like to thank all the staff who have gone out of their way to give me all the help and support possible in these difficult financial times.

2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Festivals and Events Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- British Resorts Association
- Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership
- LGA Tourism Forum
- LSP Children and Young People Thematic Group
- LSP Valuing People Thematic Group

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

Tourism and Events throughout the District

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Improve the district's competitiveness as a visitor destination:

- *Implement the Council's Tourism Strategy*
- *Attract visitors to the district by promotion of cultural events*

From 4th February 2009 the following was added to Councillor Burns' portfolio:-

- *Deliver a Civic Programme which celebrates our local heritage and benefits our communities and civic pride. Including pending Centenary celebrations (100 years Town Hall and Ashton Memorial).*

5 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9

Tourism

Tourism Strategy Update

In December 2008, Cabinet was presented with an update of the district-wide Tourism Strategy. The document included a review of the very significant progress that has been made over the two year period since the strategy was first produced, and it is worth highlighting some of these achievements here:

- Restoration work on the Midland Hotel in the centre of Morecambe, costing about £11 million, has been completed and the Midland re-opened at the beginning of June 2008. The refurbished hotel is already attracting more high spending visitors to the district and, together with plans for further redevelopment of the adjacent central promenade area, can act as a catalyst for the further regeneration of Morecambe as a significant visitor destination. The restoration and reopening of the hotel has attracted high levels of national media attention for Morecambe.
- Following the opening of the Midland Hotel, a new brochure aimed at the niche market likely to be attracted by the four and five star market has been produced. It covers the whole of the district plus some destinations just outside. This brochure has the title "Away" and was funded through the Vision Board.
- Sandy beaches – such an essential component of the British seaside experience – have returned to Morecambe. For many years the main beaches have had very little sand but following completion of the seventh phase of the coastal defence works, there is now sand on the two amenity beaches and better public access to them.
- Work to coastal defences has also brought improvements to the Sandylands section of the promenade between The Battery and Heysham, including new lighting, activity areas and improved beaches.
- The West End Gardens in Morecambe have also been completed, including a new café, and have greatly enhanced the western end of the seafront. The scheme was designed in close consultation with the local community, including schools.
- Both Tourist Information Centres have now been extensively refurbished and have re-opened as modern Visitor Information Centres in both Lancaster and Morecambe. Morecambe's Tourist Information Centre, located in the Old Station Buildings, was refurbished and re-opened in 2007. In Lancaster, the new VIC has been created as part of the Storey Institute Creative Industries Centre, with the help of external funding from Northwest Development Agency and Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board. This new VIC will be promoting the wider region as well as the local district.
- The reopening of the Storey Institute, with its improved galleries and performance space, as well as the new VIC, also provides an important new visitor attraction in Lancaster
- 60 Kilometres of cycle routes have been developed across the district. The Lune Millennium Park in Lancaster to Caton has 15 kilometres of traffic free cycle ways and paths.

The Tourism Strategy also highlights the potential to build on the District's cultural heritage offer, particularly in Lancaster, and a bid has been made to Northwest Development Agency to seek funding for development of a 10 year cultural heritage strategy for the District. It is hoped that this will help secure additional funding to

upgrade and improve some of the city's main heritage attractions and also its public realm.

Economic Impact of Tourism

The value of tourism for the local economy is assessed annually through an economic impact modelling system shared with the Tourist Board and with other local authorities throughout Lancashire, known as STEAM. The STEAM data for 2007 shows that the district had 6.71 million visitor days (staying and day visitors) and this generated £267 million for the local economy. Total tourists to the district in 2007 are reported as 4.62 million, up by 3% on 2006. An estimated 4,542 jobs (direct and indirect) are supported by tourism.

A breakdown of STEAM data for the sub areas of Lancaster, Morecambe, and rural areas showed that in 2007 total tourism revenue had increased in all parts of the District, with the highest growth (6%) in Lancaster, and 2% growth for each of Morecambe and the rural areas.

The 2008 destination benchmarking report has been received and this now gives us valuable data on tourists' perceptions of the district for every two years since 2002.

Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing activity has included significant partnership working with Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board (LBTB), including participation in the 2008 and 2009 Taste Lancashire, Night Time Buzz, Family Fun and Country Escapes thematic marketing campaigns (print and e-media).

Contacts have been maintained with national, regional and local tourism stakeholders and strategic work done with national sector bodies including the British Resorts and Destinations Association, Tourism Management Institute and the Tourism Society. Continued involvement with DP:UK Coastal group and the Historic Towns Forum (formerly EHTF) resulted in the Historic Towns Forum's annual seminar and the North West Coastal Forum being hosted in Morecambe.

A redesigned Holiday Guide for 2009 has been produced, featuring the Midland Hotel on the front cover and using the existing City, Coast & Countryside branding. Other print has included the reprint and distribution of the Cycling for All leaflets in partnership with the Cycle Demonstration Team.

The service has also participated in a number of Direct Mailing campaigns to generate interest and visits from targeted markets, as well as attended the Great Outdoor Show and the BBC Good Food Exhibition. Familiarisation trips have organised with staff and local tourism businesses.

A new, well qualified, Tourism & Marketing Officer, Rachael Dyer, has been appointed (January 2009) to replace Jane Silvester who took up a new post at Lancaster University half way through the financial year (October 2009).

Recent marketing activity has included:

- Reviewing the strategic approach for visitor marketing and production of a Visitor Marketing Plan drawing upon previously commissioned research (STEAM, Destination Benchmarking).

- Launch of the 2009 Groups campaign including the production, print and distribution of a completely new District groups travel guide; Media coverage of the launch; Creation of new graphical exhibition equipment to promote the District to external markets; Attendance at the Great Days Out Exhibition (targeting the groups market).
- Launch of the 2009 welcome information (Easter) including new Visitor Attractions Leaflet and Visitor Information maps (Lancaster, Morecambe and NW versions).
- Review and cleansing of the Destination Management System (DMS), the District database (part of the wider LBTB database) containing all visitor product data for the Lancaster District (accommodation; attractions; events; retail; food and drink; activities). This data is then used as the principal source of information for all print and visitor information (VIC operating systems, visitor information websites).
- Review and design of the new visitor facing website for the Lancaster District (a microsite of the LBTB visitor website launching at Easter).

Other work has included supporting a number of ongoing development projects including:

- The creation of a private sector led umbrella organisation to represent and engage existing sector related organisations (such as Lancaster and District Tourist Association, Morecambe Hoteliers Association);
- The creation of an Eric Morecambe RHS award winning garden to be sited in Morecambe;
- The launch of a leisure hovercraft service in Morecambe Bay;
- Support of Travelodge Hotel Planning application (Morecambe).

Tourism website

During 2007 there were 124,595 unique visitors to the official visitor website (www.citycoastcountryside.co.uk) and this grew to 181,149 for 2008, an increase of 46%. Over this same period, the number of hits on the visitor website almost doubled from 7.8 million in 2007 to 15.3 million in 2008.

Overseas students' reception

Following discussions between Council's economic development service and Lancaster & Cumbria Universities about the economic potential of their overseas links, the Council's Overseas Students reception was reinstated this year (on a trial basis) with a new format. This was designed to maximise the impact of the "civic" welcome to the city, combined with a strong sell on the tourism offer. The revised event was held on 23rd October and was very successful, with over 150 students attending. It is hoped that the event will encourage increasing numbers of overseas students to bring friends and family for visits to the District during and after their studies at the two Universities.

Events throughout the district

Festivals and Events

The year started with great expectation, Councillors John Barnes and Roger Dennison brought forward the idea of a spectacular event provisionally named 'Look Out to Sea', which would have been held all over the district during April. They had contacted the Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, Coastguard, R.N.L.I., Cadets, Veterans, Schools, Fishermen and others, who all seemed eager to be involved.

It would have been:

- Entertainment - for tourists and residents;
- Education - i.e. lectures in schools;
- Employment – recruitment to the forces.

Unfortunately as the Credit Crunch began to bite, promises started to be retracted, and reluctantly the event had to be disbanded for the present time.

I was delighted to see so many people enjoying the festivals, the Promenade was packed with tourists and locals enjoying these events, and it was a great relief when Council agreed to once again finance the Kite and Sandcastle Festivals.

The Lancaster Firework Spectacular was as popular as ever, and encourages families to watch this event rather than risk the dangers of small individual fires.

Future

We feel confident more tourists will be spending holidays in the U.K., therefore we are anticipating sharing our Historic City, fantastic views across the bay, walking along our fabulous promenade and enjoying our beautiful countryside with a record number of tourists during 2009.

Another up and coming holiday trend around here is numerous permanent static caravan sites, all these people spend money in our area.

The Winter Gardens, due to a few dedicated people has begun to see the light at the end of the tunnel and hopes to open in the not too distant future.

Lancaster Town Hall Centenary Celebrations

2009 is the Centenary year for Lancaster Town Hall and the Ashton Memorial and I am pleased to report that, towards the end of 2009, there are events planned which will mark these important anniversaries. Something to look forward to, these will include an Edwardian Themed Fireworks festival and a Choral Concert in the Ashton Hall.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR JON BARRY, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CITY COUNCIL (DIRECT) SERVICES INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT



1 INTRODUCTION

I think that CCDS has performed well this year. I am also pleased that the Climate Change group is beginning to have an impact and I look forward to further progress this year – both in terms of reducing energy useage by the Council and in bidding for money to help residents do the same. My main disappointment is that we have not introduced free schools recycling in schools. Sadly, this was a last minute victim of the budget process.

2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Recycling Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairperson)

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- LSP Environment Thematic Group
- Waste Management Strategy Steering Group (Lancashire Waste Partnership)

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

City Contract (Direct) Services

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Cleaner streets and public open spaces:

- Improve the cleanliness of our streets and public spaces*
- Reduce dog fouling incidents*

Reduce waste in the district by recycling and re-use:

- Complete the recycling and waste management programme*
- Continue to develop the recycling of commercial waste*

Reduce the impact of climate change within the district:

- Develop local responses to mitigate and adapt to climate change.*

5 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9

CCDS – Highlights

Waste / Recycling

- Completed roll out of new waste collection arrangements
- Expect to achieve a recycling figure of 33+% at 08/09 outturn and be a top quartile performer for low overall amount of waste collected.
- First District in Lancashire to agree district wide food waste collection arrangements from 2010/11
- Bulky Matters has reused / recycled around 60% of bulky items collected.
- Plans to roll out Bulky Matters to other Councils (eg Blackpool)
- Trade waste recycling service introduced and wider roll out due to start April 2009
- Elected as Vice Chair of Lancashire Waste Partnership

Grounds Maintenance

- Won award at Tatton show and now planning this year's entry
- Supported various 'in Bloom' entries
- Ongoing playground refurbishment programme (as funds allow!)

Cleansing

- Noticeable improvement in standards of street cleansing and response to reports of flytipping, littering etc. Targets for NI 195 (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting) agreed and likely to be achieved.
- ENCAMS independent survey of cleanliness shows standards compare favourably with other Lancashire Districts.
- 2008/9 'Street Pride' scheme has worked well and 2009/10 programme is being planned
- Worked with other local agencies on 'clean sweep'
- Two new waste and cleansing enforcement officers recruited. Targeted enforcement combined with education and improved service delivery is having an impact.

Highways Maintenance

- Continued successful delivery of Highways Maintenance as a sub contractor to the County Council. Performance targets consistently achieved.

General

- Major reductions in sickness absence
- Ongoing training for frontline staff (customer care, manual handling, service specific training etc)
- Ongoing driver training programme in place
- Major efficiencies generated (eg improved management of the Council's fleet)
- Introduced new traffic management arrangements to the depot- which will improve safety and reduce traffic within the depot.

Climate Change Liaison Group

The Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group have achieved a great deal throughout the 2008/09 municipal year. The majority of their time and resources have been committed to ensuring the year one actions of the In-House Climate Change Strategy have been effectively carried out.

Successes this year include:

- Managing the implementation of recommendations laid out by the Carbon Trust in their Energy Audit of Lancaster City Council's corporate buildings

This has resulted in the instigation of an energy efficiency programme at Salt Ayre Sports Centre, which will result in significant financial and carbon savings.

- The approval and installation of *powerPerfactor*, a voltage optimiser, at Lancaster Town Hall, which should increase energy efficiency in this building.

The Group have also played a key role in a range of initiatives to address sustainability and climate change at Lancaster City Council. This includes encouraging action aimed at achieving relevant National Indicators and supporting the partnership between the Council and the Energy Saving Trust. As a result, Lancaster City Council has now been accepted onto the EST's Green Fleet Review and their One-to-One Support Programme, which provides advice, consultation, assistance with action planning and improved access to funding.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- **COMMUNITY SAFETY**
- **EMERGENCY PLANNING**
- **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PLANNING ENFORCEMENT**
- **CYCLING DEMONSTRATION TOWN**



1 INTRODUCTION

This has been a successful year in which all departments have achieved a great deal. My thanks go to all the officers and staff who have worked so hard and achieved so much. Many challenges lie ahead but with such dedicated staff I am sure they will be dealt with.

2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group
- Neighbourhood Management Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Management Group
- Cycling Demonstration Town Board
- Lancashire Police Authority Partnerships Forum
- Lancaster District Community Safety Strategy Group, Executive Member
- LSP Safety Thematic Group

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

Community Safety
Emergency Planning
Strategic Planning and planning enforcement
Cycling Demonstration Town

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Reduce crime and the fear of crime and help residents feel safer in their communities:

Work with our partners in the Community Safety Partnership to deliver the partnership's crime reduction targets

Work with Prevent and Deter Forum to produce joint action plans to address anti-social behaviour

Reduce domestic violence:

Work in partnership in line with the Domestic Abuse Strategy

Reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents:

Work with the Community Safety Partnership to influence the County Council to implement a continuing programme of road safety improvements

Improve economic prosperity throughout the district:

Prioritise the development of previously used land and restrain greenfield development through the Local Development Framework.

Contribute to health improvement and reduce health inequalities through both delivery of our own services and our work with partners:

Implement the Cycling Demonstration Town Programme.

5 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9:

Community Safety

The Community Safety Partnership continues to perform well against its key targets – reducing alcohol related violent crime and criminal damage. The targets for the CSP for this past year have also included Prolific and Priority Offenders scheme, domestic violence, assault with injury and domestic burglary. The CSP will need to ensure that it continues to have the capacity to deliver against this wide range of targets and that performance management systems are in place.

The Partnership has continued to work within a changing landscape over the past year and further changes are sure to come. The Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership has now published its Sustainable Community Strategy and restructured itself with a Board, Management Group and seven Thematic Groups. Safety is one of these groups and I continue to be its Chair.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) continue to patrol the district, helping to reduce antisocial behaviour and enhance the feeling of community safety. Four of the environmental PCSOs which are totally funded by the City Council will cease in 2009 as a result of budget decisions taken by council.

The Multi Agency Problem Solving (MAPs) team is based in offices on Caton Road. The City Council's Community Safety Officer and assistant are based in these offices. Other agencies involved are Police, Fire and Rescue, Youth Offending Team, and Youth and Community Services.

City Council Officer have linked to the MAPs team with particular issues to find multi-agency solutions through the Joint Tasking Group and continue to be involved in initiatives such as Clean Sweep.

The lease on the MAPs building expires shortly and plans are being put in place to relocate the MAPs team to another location in the district.

The Domestic Violence Co-ordinator post is currently vacant and there are no plans to replace the post.

Spend for the financial year 2008-2009 is on track with no under-spend anticipated. There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding future funding arrangements for the CSP and this is hampering medium term planning.

Civil Contingencies

There have been a number of matters to report in the Civil Contingencies work area during 2008/2009.

Emergency Planning

- Two new emergency plans were published. Firstly a Coastal Pollution plan covering the Council's response to any oil or chemical pollution on the beaches of the District. Secondly, in conjunction with the local residents, a Community Emergency Plan has been produced to deal with incidents at Sunderland Point, particularly flooding and weather related emergencies but also events that occur when the access road is covered by the tide. Both plans were externally quality assured by the County Council Emergency Planning Service. As a result of the second plan being published two residents were invited to speak at a Cabinet Office Community Resilience Seminar in Manchester in January.
- The Council has also published a Community Recover Plan, based on national best practice guidelines. This plan covers how the Council will lead any post major incident recovery process and many Council Services were involved in its production. We are the first Council in Lancashire to publish such a plan.
- The Council has participated in several emergency exercises during the year. These test our plans and also give Council officers the chance to develop new skills in realistic but safe situations. Exercises in 2008/09 included.
 - Exercise Act Now – July – Terrorist Incident exercise aimed at local community groups – approximately 30 people participated including the Chief Executive and members of the Community Leaders Group.
 - Exercise Cerberus – December – table top exercise held in Lancaster dealing with a 'cross border' Cumbria/Lancaster rabies incident – 3 Lancaster City Council officers attended.
 - Exercise Eskrigge – January – Seminar Exercise held at White Lund Depot, where 14 Council staff participated, and the new Coastal Pollution Plan was tested.
 - Exercise Vulcan – test of Lancashire Pipeline Plan at The Red Rose Hub – 2 Lancaster City Council officers participated.
- The Duty Emergency Incident Officer scheme has continued to give the Council a trained officer 24/7/365 to respond to emergencies where a Council presence is requested by the 'blue light' services. The eleven volunteer officers (eight plus three reserves) have all attended a variety of training and exercise opportunities during the year. They have also begun to participate in some live Fire Service exercises that have proved very beneficial in subsequent live emergencies. The officers are equipped with Airwave radio, computer, plans and PPE and have greatly enhanced the Council's resilience and ability to deal with these incidents.

Good feedback has been received from the local Fire and Police services about the Council's recent response to incidents in the district.

- Incidents attended during the past year have included flooding and severe weather incidents, chemical incidents (transporting and fly-tipping), building collapses and the sinking of the dredger in Heysham Harbour.
- Several senior Council officers have participated in familiarisation training at the Strategic Coordinating Centre at Police Headquarters, where the Council would be expected to send a senior representative should the facility be opened for a major incident in the Lancaster area. In a similar vein, further volunteers from within the Council have been trained to operate the District Emergency Control Centre at Lancaster Town Hall.

Business Continuity

- Business Continuity plans have been activated on several occasions for IT and Telephony failures and also following the discovery of possible asbestos contamination in Morecambe Town Hall basement.
- The Council has purchased a software system known as Battle Baton that will enhance the ability to store up to date plans and to contact members of staff in an emergency. This includes the ability to send and receive text messages from the Battle Baton system, which is expected to have a number of 'spin off' benefits.

Strategic Planning and Planning Enforcement

2008/09 has seen the City Council adopt the very first Local Development Framework Core Strategy in North West England. This places us in a strong position to direct investment into the best locations when an upturn in the economy comes. The City Council is also taking a further step towards refining sub regional strategy by taking a further championing role towards the formation of a Morecambe Bay Regional Park, one of the objectives of which could be the alignment of Local Development Frameworks to form a single set of complimentary objectives around Morecambe Bay. Further progress on the Local Development Framework will be affected by the need for the City Council to make reductions in services whilst it faces its current financial challenges. It hopes, however, to continue to make progress with its Land Allocations document despite cuts in other areas. Activity on planning applications has reduced, but is counter balanced by the significant workload currently emerging to handle the major call in public inquiry for the Canal Corridor North development.

Cycling Demonstration Town Project (CDT)

In October 2008 we completed the first phase of our three year Cycling Demonstration Town Project. Outputs included the completion of links in our off-road cycle routes, extensive training programmes, promotion and publicity to encourage more people to choose to cycle and working with major employers to encourage staff to cycle to work. The outcome is an average increase in uptake of cycling of about 7% each year. The full evaluation of the initial three year project is still being finalised by Sustrans.

The further good news is that the City Council has been successful in bidding for a further three years CDT funding with an approved work programme focussing on access into and around Lancaster City Centre.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR ROGER MACE, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY, FROM 4th FEBRUARY 2009, FOR

- **JOINT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO – EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND REGENERATION IN THE LANCASTER PART OF LANCASTER AND WYRE CONSTITUENCY, AND COMMUNITY PLANNING.**

Until 4th February, Councillor Mace's responsibilities were:-

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNCILS**
- **NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT IN THE DISTRICT**
- **FINANCE**
- **COMMUNITY PLANNING**
- **TRANSPORT – INCLUDING PARKING POLICY**



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 One important milestone in the economic development of the District was the announcement that the Heysham-M6 Link Road has been given programme entry status. Construction is expected to commence in 2010.

1.2 Another significant event during the year was the City's decision to move forward with the creation of Morecambe Parish Council – a decision that was referred back to the City Council by Central Government, following a change in relevant legislation. Elections for the 26 places on the new Council are expected to take place on 4 June 2009.

1.3 I was a guest at a dinner on 7 July to celebrate the opening of The Midland Hotel. The renaissance of the Hotel is a powerful symbol of the regeneration of Morecambe.

1.4 In the current municipal year, I have contributed to:-

- the restructuring of the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) which has meant that the Partnership is better able than before to tackle effectively the needs of the District,
- the emergence of the Sustainable Community Strategy for the District, (launched at the Platform in Morecambe on 12th December 2008) which has meant that the needs and aspirations of the District are better articulated than before,

- the work of the LDLSP on the development of a Community Engagement Framework which will improve engagement with our communities by the key partners in the LDLSP. This project is closely linked to the City Council's own priority outcomes in the Corporate Plan for 2008-9, namely [priority outcome 16] to work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated and [priority outcome17] for local communities to have more influence and involvement in the way services are delivered.
- the publication of the Faber Maunsell Report offering practical ideas for the development of the transport infrastructure in the District, additional to the benefits to be provided by the construction of the Heysham-M6 Link,
- the production of the long awaited revised parking strategy for the district, and
- negotiating a future role for the Lancaster and District Vision Board in the context of the new structure of the LDLSP, and the long term economic development of the District. The Vision Board was a Building Block of the former Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and is now represented on the Economy Thematic Group of the LDLSP, alongside representatives from the City Council and the County Council. The Vision Board also provides the representatives of the Economy Stakeholder on the LDLSP Board and on the LDLSP Management Group. I will say more about the LDLSP in section 5 below.

2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet (Chairman*)
- Star Chamber (Chairman*)
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman*)
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group (Chairman*)
- Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman*)
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee (Chairman*)
- Neighbourhood Management Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman*)
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman*)
- Universities Cabinet Liaison Group

*** Until 4th February 2009**

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Board (Chairperson)
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Management Group (Vice Chairperson)
- Lancashire Leaders Meeting *
- Lancaster and District Vision Board (formerly LSP Regeneration Building Block) (Vice Chairman)
- North West Regional Assembly *

*** Until 4th February 2009**

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Until 4 th February 2009	From 4 th February 2009
<p>Relationships with other Councils. Neighbourhood Management in the District. Finance Community Planning Transport – including Parking Policy.</p>	<p>Joint Economic Portfolio – Employment Opportunities and Regeneration in the Lancaster part of Lancaster and Wyre Constituency Community Planning</p>

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Until 4 th February 2009	From 4 th February 2009
<p>Keep the City Council Element of Council Tax increase to acceptable levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Keep annual Council Tax increases to a minimum in 2009/10 and 2010/11</i> <p>Work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop and implement a Community Cohesion Strategy</i> • <i>Deliver a Civic Programme which celebrates our local heritage and benefits our communities.</i> <p>Local Communities have more influence and involvement in the way services are delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop neighbourhood management arrangements for the district.</i> <p>An improved quality of life for those who live, work in and visit the Lancaster District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with members of the LSP on joint initiatives to implement the Sustainable Community Strategy. 	<p>Improve economic prosperity throughout the Lancaster District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deliver a district wide sustainable regeneration programme based on the economic vision and strategy.</i> • <i>Launch revised business development grant scheme for 12 months and work with Storey CIC to provide targeted support to creative industries.</i> <p>Work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop and implement a Community Cohesion Strategy</i> <p>An improved quality of life for those who live, work in and visit the Lancaster District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with members of the LSP on joint initiatives to implement the Sustainable Community Strategy.</i>

5 COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

5.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy was based on a district-wide consultation process and sets out the strategic vision for our District. It embodies the aspiration that “Working together will improve the quality of life for everyone in our district”.

Working with members of the LDLSP on joint initiatives to implement the Sustainable Community Strategy has been a major focus for me in the past year.

There are 21 Priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy, each of which has been allocated to one of the Thematic Groups in the LDLSP. Detailed action plans for achieving these priorities are being developed by the Thematic Groups, and bids for funding these plans are being considered by the Management Group, using criteria established by the LDLSP Board.

5.2 The LDLSP structure for delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy is:-

The LDLSP Board – Ensures the operation, existence and guardianship of the LDLSP.

The LDLSP Management Group – is responsible for delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (including performance management, resource allocation and community engagement).

The LDLSP Thematic Groups – Seven ‘Themed’ Groups are as follows:-

Children & Young People
Economy
Education, Skills & Opportunities
Environment
Health & Wellbeing
Safety
Valuing People

These Thematic Groups are responsible for delivery of the Priorities allocated to them from within the Sustainable Community Strategy under the umbrella of the LDLSP Management Group. Each Thematic Group is attended by two Cabinet members and this has contributed to raising the profile of the LDLSP within the Council.

The work of the Economic Strategy Board that was set up in 2007-8 and to which I referred in my report last year has been undertaken this year within the Economy Thematic Group of the LDLSP.

Details of all aspects of the LDLSP and the Sustainable Community Strategy are available at www.lancaster.gov.uk/lsp

6 FINANCE PORTFOLIO

6.1 The major aim of the finance portfolio is to deliver the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy. This is to keep Council Tax rises at acceptable levels while

strengthening the Council's financial position and having an affordable capital programme balanced over five years. This year, the aim throughout the year was that the Council Tax in 2009-10 would not exceed the total of Council Tax and Special Expenses in the previous year by more than 4%, but a number of factors arising during the year made it seem increasingly unlikely that the target would be met.

6.2 The budget problems were for the most part not of the Council's making – for example a projected loss of interest income from the City's cash balances arose partly due to income no longer accruing on deposits in Icelandic banks, but was made worse by the decline in interest rates on the remaining cash balances – a decline determined by the interest rate policy of the Government. The Council's problems have also been caused by Government's inadequate funding of the extra activities it has forced District Councils to undertake - most significantly the concessionary travel scheme for the over 60s.

6.3 Locally, there was an increase in the rent of the premises of Lancaster Market - which was backdated to June 2005 - and was greater than had been provided for. In more normal circumstances, eliminating the deficit on Lancaster Market, amounting to about 6% of the City's Council Tax might have been sufficient to keep Council Tax within reasonable bounds, but the recent decline in economic activity meant that opportunities that may once have been available to find a different - and viable - future for the Market Building gradually faded away.

6.4 In December, Council decided to change the system of allocating City Council expenditure of Council Tax between Council Tax payers in different parts of the District. The result of this change is that Council Tax charged to most of the rural areas in the District for meeting City Council expenditure in 2009-10 has gone up by 10.5% (ten and a half per cent), while the City's demand for Council Tax from households in parts of the district in which there are no parish councils has gone up by only 1% (one per cent). I considered this change to be unfair in its failure to recognise issues of double taxation and the functional roles of Parish and Town Councils in our District. Residents in Parished areas are paying twice for some services which are provided in their areas by Parish Councils and Town Councils but are provided by the City Council in other areas. I welcome the decision of Council to tackle these problems - albeit belatedly - by undertaking in 2009-10 the Review of the Funding of Parish Councils which was first mooted several years ago.

6.5 Cabinet decided to recommend to Council the planned 4% rise in the City's Council Tax before it knew of the nature of the cuts necessary to achieve it. I was unwilling to propose this recommendation to Council and resigned on 4th February.

7 TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO – PARKING CHARGES

7.1 Cabinet agreed proposals in January that charges for parking for up to two hours in the City Council's Car Parks should be held constant at £1.60. This charge is the same as in 2007-8, and for all except a short period at the start of 2008-9 - and is now being repeated in 2009-10. The decision was designed to support the customers and clients whose patronage is vital to help shops and service providers stay in business in our urban centres in the current difficult economic climate.

7.2 An innovative 24/5 parking permit has been introduced in 2009-10 in addition to the long standing 24/7 permit. Permit fees for the 24/7 permit are rising by 5% in 2009-10, but the new permit has been introduced at a discount of 5% compared with the new fee for the 24/7 permit. This new annual permit is designed for those

commuters who know they will only require parking facilities for 5 days a week and not 7 days a week. Users who elect to buy the 24/5 permit in 2009-10 will pay the same amount as they paid for last year's permit. For employees to have no increase in their commuting cost payable for using the City Council's Car Parks is a clear benefit in the current recession.

7.3 Despite the above features of the charges for 2009-10, total income from parking charges is budgeted to increase by more than the rate of inflation – and off street parking charges continue to contribute to funding the Council's general expenditures.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Not every project was as successful as I might have hoped. It was often a matter relating to the availability of resources that caused problems. Difficulties arose in respect of completing the sales of some Council property assets, and delays in the receipt of funding – or the withdrawal of anticipated funding - caused delays in progressing capital projects, not least Chatsworth Gardens, and Luneside East. The proposed Central Park in Morecambe lost its funding: no budget was available to progress the Access to Services Project or to make inroads into the backlog of repairs to the two Town Halls, and the start of work on the Centros Development has also been delayed. The future of Neighbourhood Management also appears bleak due to the loss of ring fenced external grant funding, and the severe budgetary constraints faced by the City Council for at least the next two or three years have made it unlikely that the City Council could “mainstream” more than a token part of the activities previously funded through Neighbourhood Management.

8.2 Excluding days of illness and private holiday, I was available for Council duties on 154 weekdays during my Leadership of the Council from 19 May 2008 to 4 February 2009 inclusive. The number of meetings I have attended may come as a surprise to some. My diary shows I was away from Lancaster for political purposes for 11 full days, and that I attended 97 formal meetings and 115 informal meetings inside the District and 15 meetings outside the District – including a total of 47 evening meetings out of the total of 227. Meetings are supplemented by e-mails and phone calls - and my home computer system shows that other than those for private purposes, I sent over 3300 e-mails, and opened over 4500 incoming e-mail messages during those eight and a half months (262 days). I have no separate record to enable me to account to Council for my telephone conversations or to count the myriad of resolutions I proposed, seconded or amended.

8.3 Last year, I ended my report as Leader of the Council on the optimistic note that the groups had worked well together in Cabinet, despite the doubts held by many that a PR Cabinet containing five political Groups could ever achieve enough harmony to reach decisions. Those doubts that I dismissed last year had more truth in them than I had hoped. I was able to sustain the roles of Chairing the Cabinet, and being Leader of the Council, only for so long as I could justify the decisions being made. By February 4th as tensions rose on a number of matters, and differences between groups became progressively of greater importance than similarities, it had become apparent that to negotiate consensus at that point had become a pipe dream, and that only by resigning could I properly defend the interests of communities in my Ward against decisions made by others which I believe are to the detriment of the District as a whole.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR JOHN GILBERT, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND CUSTOMER SERVICES
- REVENUES AND BENEFITS
- HOMELESSNESS
- DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
- LEGAL AND LICENSING SERVICES
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION



1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

This portfolio contains a large range of unconnected responsibilities. Some of the reports consist simply of a list of achievements, but others need more in the way of explanation, so that it is difficult to present in an entirely coherent manner. All areas except Information Technology and Customer Services and Homelessness are new to me and it has needed a lot of hard work to get up to speed on the new topics.

This is the first time I have been involved in the LDLSP, for which I became chairman of the Valuing People Thematic Group (VPTG). The first year of the new organisation has been quite frenetic, with the need to plan projects and get bids for finance in before the end of the financial year. VTPG has been part of an application by the Lancashire Community Cohesion Group for The Resilient and Cohesive Communities theme, which has gained Beacon Partner status for the City Council.

2 CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

Provide customer focused accessible services:

- *Progress the Access to Services programme by moving the customer facing element of more services into the new face to face centres.*
- *Reduce avoidable contact from citizens.*
- *Improve score against Equality Standard for Local Government.*

Develop a service culture that embraces transformational change:

- *Publish consistent, measurable service standards.*
- *Provide training for all customer facing staff.*
- *Co-locating staff from partner and voluntary organisations in our Customer Service Centres.*

Local communities have more influence and involvement in the way services are delivered:

- *Increase the Council's responsiveness to local concerns by improving consultation and communication procedures.*

3 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- District Wide Tenants Cabinet Liaison Group
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group
- Universities Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)

4 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Management Group
- Lancaster and District YMCA Management Board
- LSP Health and Wellbeing Thematic Group
- LSP Valuing People Thematic Group (Chairman)

5 PROGRESS MADE IN 2008/9:

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

During the year Information and Customer Services have played a valuable role co-ordinating, planning and implementing IT and telephony systems for the benefit of all Council services and members. They have:

1. Expanded the services available in the face to face Customer Service Centres in Morecambe and Lancaster Town Halls. All types of homelessness and housing standard queries are now dealt with initially within the customer service centre in Morecambe, allowing a far better environment for those requiring the standard services. The new facilities provide a more efficient and comfortable experience for visitors, with the availability of private interview rooms for those wanting a more confidential discussion. The queue management system helps to ensure that customers have as short a wait as possible. The changes mean that staff from Health and Strategic Housing also have been moved into a more suitable and secure environment following a number of years in inadequate accommodation at Euston Road.
2. Answered over one hundred and thirty thousand phone calls for the Council's main switchboard (582000) and Streetscene phone numbers.
3. Procured, configured and installed a new way of staff accessing computer systems which will enable staff to hot desk efficiently from any Council site. Initially this system has been installed across Morecambe Town Hall and has allowed far more staff to be accommodated within the office space of Morecambe town Hall than was possible previously. The previous offices at Euston Road can now potentially be disposed of adding to the Council's capital receipts.
4. Procured, tested and installed a new modern telephone system currently rolled out to the whole of Morecambe Town Hall, White Lund etc This system allows officers to hot desk from any telephone extension and will support further homeworking and hot desking initiatives across the Council. Over one hundred staff been trained in the use of the new telephone system and the new hot desking system.

5. Replaced over a hundred and forty desktop computers and continued to upgrade the Council's infrastructure including upgrades of the network to allow faster access to information for anywhere within the Council's buildings, expanded our investment in advanced storage and recovery systems, etc. Any redundant equipment is sent to be reused and recycled for community use by a not-for-profit organisation, our partners Furniture Matters.
6. Protected the City Council's computer network from over one million computer virus attacks and eight million spam emails - providing a high level of security for the Council's corporate systems despite ever increasing and more sophisticated attacks.
7. Developed further the Council website, usage of which continues to grow strongly – unique users have grown by more than 13% over the last twelve months and in the last twelve months there were 1.72 million page views.
8. Changed and strengthened computer security for every user of the Council network to allow the Council to join the secure national infrastructure. This will allow to Council to work with many national and regional organisations sharing sensitive information in a secure and managed manner.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS

1. Implemented a restructure of the Service that delivered efficiency savings which contributed to the council's achievement of its target for limiting the rise in Council Tax for 2008/9 to 4%.
2. Maintained a high performing benefits service with fewer resources than in 2007/8, demonstrating value for money improvements and cashable savings.
3. Benefits service retained its rating as "excellent" against self assessment of DWP Performance Standards and the new National Performance Indicators for payment of benefit claims and processing changes of circumstances.
4. Continued to improve partnership working with other agencies and stakeholders. CAB now have a presence in the City Council's customer services centres one day a week.
5. Continued to improve the customer experience by the provision of shortened claim forms and a range of easy to read Information Sheets; and developed literature in alternative languages.
6. Effectively implemented the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance and Empty Property Rate legislation.
7. Maintained improved collection rates from previous year for both NNDR & Council Tax and implemented more stringent recovery procedures for non payers.
8. Managed the procurement and implementation of a corporate document management system in Revenue Services, Planning Services, Council Housing, and Creditors.

HOMELESSNESS

1. The Homelessness service has exceeded the corporate plan, national indicator and business plan targets this year. The continued focus on prevention and

partnership with voluntary sector organisations seems to be working well. However, we cannot be complacent as the current recession is already starting to have an impact on the workload of the homeless team. We are expecting a difficult year for homelessness and targets will need to be set to take account of the current economic climate.

2. The Homelessness service has successfully established the Sanctuary Scheme, which aims to make it possible for victims and potential victims of domestic abuse to remain in their home and feel safe.
3. The Homelessness Strategy was approved in July 2008 following extensive consultation. DCLG have congratulated the Council on its strategic approach to homelessness including Member commitment and links with the LSP. However, they questioned whether the Council could deliver the Strategy based on its current level of resources allocated to homelessness. In response, a Senior Housing Advisory Officer post is to be created within that team from existing budgets.
4. A new contract for homeless prevention services has just replaced the old service level agreements with voluntary organisations. The Homeless Review identified a need for a more streamlined and targeted service and this resulted in a tender process for one single contract. YMCA/Signposts were awarded the contract and the Council is now looking forward to a productive relationship with them and improved outcomes for homeless and potentially homeless people in our district.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. With no elections in 2008, the opportunity was taken to review and consolidate some of the new practices introduced for the 2007 elections, particularly around postal vote checking – improved ways of working should be in place for 2009 when the Service will be put to the test running 3 elections on 4th June – the European, County Council and the new Morecambe Parish across a large area of the District. The ‘threat’ of a General Election remains although not for 4th June it is hoped.
2. A new duty was placed on Local Authorities to promote elections and electoral registration; not only were additional promotional methods used but the Elections Officer was able to take full advantage of all grants available from central government for this purpose.
3. Time and effort has been put into the development of recording systems to provide the necessary evidence demanded to meet a range of new Electoral Commission performance indicators. Work has already begun to prepare for the 2009 elections which will impact on the capacity of the Service in other areas of work.
4. The Service and the Elections Officer in particular has been working with the Office of National Statistics to prepare for a census rehearsal in Lancaster which will take place in October 2009.
5. In Members Services, the review of civic events has continued, constantly striving to improve the impact of each event at the same time as reducing costs. Minor cuts have been made to the budget and Council has taken the decision to bring to an end its involvement in twinning and the international youth games.

6. A review of distribution and the supply of printed documents to Councillors is ongoing and this has resulted in a reduction in the working hours of the Mayoral attendant without affecting the service provided to the Mayor.
7. In Democratic Support there have been some staff changes in 2008, resulting in a few changes in responsibilities. Staff in this section and in Members Services concentrated their efforts on moving Member Development a step further forward this year and successfully achieved *North West Charter Status* for the Council.
8. In conjunction with Information Services a review of laptop provision to Councillors has also been undertaken and should be completed shortly.
9. There has been continued progress with the use of technology in committee management. All Councillors now have computer access to committee documents and other information and work is ongoing to help Members make best use of this system. It will include encouraging Councillors and Officers to attend meetings with agenda downloaded onto their laptop rather than using a paper copy, hopefully with the result eventually that paper and printing costs can be even further reduced.
10. Development of the committee management system for internal administration has also continued and is now being used to monitor the implementation of decisions.
11. The process to reach a decision on the Morecambe Town Council petition was passed to the City Council by the Department of Local Government and the Communities during 2008 and a conclusion was finally reached. The Order has now been made and the elections to the new Council will be held on 4th June. Support from the service will continue up to and including their first Annual Council in the middle of June.

LEGAL AND LICENSING SERVICES

The Legal team has been at full strength and unchanged since November 2007. This has enabled the solicitors to develop good working relationships with the client services allocated to them. The routine day to day work includes debt collection, recovery of rent arrears, Council house sales and other property transactions, including sales and leases. Advice is routinely provided for Cabinet reports and Licensing, Planning and Appeals committees.

1. There have been a number of successful prosecutions throughout the course of the year, relating to a range of issues including smoking, dangerous dogs, failure to comply with a housing notice and breach of health and safety regulations. An appeal against the revocation of a taxi driver's licence was also successfully defended.
2. Legal advice has been given on all major regeneration and property projects, including the Canal Corridor, Chatsworth Gardens, Luneside East and Morecambe Football Club, as well as the Town Green Application in Lancaster South.
3. Local land charges have continued to maintain a high standard of services, returning most searches within five working days. However, the number of searches has reduced dramatically as a result of the current economic climate and the state of the housing market.

4. In Licensing, the Gambling Act 2005, implemented in 2007 has bedded in, but has raised some complex and difficult issues with regard to amusement and bingo halls, which have required significant input from the Licensing Manager.
5. Problem premises under the Licensing Act 2003 continue to be dealt with by a Multi Agency Licensing Team.
6. Taxi Liaison Groups have been developed to improve discussion between the main taxi companies, the police, the highway authority and the Council's licensing officers on matters of common interest.
7. A requirement has been introduced for all new applicants for driver licences to attend a training course at Lancaster and Morecambe College, and it is hoped that this will improve the level of service provided to the public.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

1. Review of communications and marketing has led to the agreed principle of centralising all communications and marketing activity giving a budget target reduction of £41,000 for 2009/10.
2. Council generated publicity achieved an equivalent advertising rate, in the local papers alone, of almost £280,000, up £8,000 on the previous year. In total, 405 press releases were issued and 1,232 press enquiries were dealt with by the press office function. As well as contact from the local media the press office continues to be contacted by a range of other national newspapers, radio stations, periodicals and on-line news networks.
3. Already rated more highly than any other public sector press office in the district, this year's annual media survey saw a rise in satisfaction with the service.
4. Staff required to provide information to the media have been provided with bespoke training courses by the communications officer.
5. Members and officers have also taken part in media training this year.
6. Photography training has also been provided to increase coverage of council activities via the media and provide a source of quality images for use across all council marketing materials.
7. One of the most popular features of the City Council's website for the public is its provision of news.
8. A page has been designed for the council's website dedicated to students and has so far received 404 hits.
9. The *My Council* campaign was launched in October, with the specific aim of increasing customer awareness of what their council does and the value for money it provides for the, on average, £3.56, households pay per week. This has been particularly pertinent in these difficult financial times when budget cuts mean customers, more than ever, need to be aware of what they are getting for their money. Response has been positive and the campaign will be developed during 2009/10.

10. Three issues of *Your District Council Matters* go to every household in the district drawing in an income of approximately £6,000. This helped to bring the overall cost of the magazine to approximately 13p per household. The latest issue included recession busting advice and promoted a range of council services which would otherwise have had to be advertised via alternative routes. Demand for articles in the magazine from services and partners continues to outstrip the space available.
11. A new Council Tax leaflet, which incorporates an A-Z of Council services, has been produced this year.
12. The consultation officer has just completed her first year in post. As well as leading on the development and delivery of corporate consultations, such as the Employee Survey, the Place Survey and corporate priorities, she has also provided expert advice and support to over 25 council consultations, developed a new consultation policy and procedure, trained staff in use of the online consultation system and played an active role in the County Research Network Group.
13. A new approach to print and design is paying dividends with a more consistent standard of design, print and branding. Council policies regarding corporate identity have been strengthened, resulting in increased use of and appearance of the council's identity, making it clearer to customers who the provider is and raising the council's profile.
14. A change in postal delivery supplier has generated significant savings.
15. Internal communications have been very important for keeping staff informed about Fair Pay and Access to Services, with the intranet being the most efficient, as well as the staffs' preferred, medium.

6 CONCLUSION

Despite the difficult national economic situation and the need to make an even huger budgetary saving than usual, the services in my portfolio have still managed to make some improvements in their provision to members and the public. This is in no small measure due to the dedicated and enthusiastic contributions from all the officers, to whom I give my grateful thanks.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLORS TONY JOHNSON AND SUSIE CHARLES, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- RURAL AREA PORTFOLIO
- PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT and EFFICIENCY

*(Councillor Johnson held this Cabinet portfolio from 19th May to 17th June,
Councillor Charles from 17th June to end of 2008/9)*



1 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

Councillor Johnson

- Cabinet
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group

Councillor Charles

- Cabinet
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group

2 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Arnside and Silverdale AONB Unit
- Forest of Bowland AONB Advisory Committee
- Lancashire Rural Affairs Forum
- Lancashire Rural Partnership
- Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership (formerly Northern Reaches Steering Group)
- LGA Rural Commission
- LSP Management Group
- North West Rural Affairs Forum

3 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES - PROGRESS DURING 2008/9:

Rural Areas

Arnside/Silverdale and Forest of Bowland AONBs

2008/9 has seen considerable activity in the main areas of rural land management. Both the Arnside/Silverdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB have reviewed their Management Plans and this work has involved the consideration of significant new impacts such as climate change and sustainability testing. The City Council has appointed a new manager for the Arnside and Silverdale AONB and the post

holder is now making considerable progress in adapting the operation the Natural England's new strategic agenda. The adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy will advocate urban concentration, but the City Council is taking appropriate policy steps to ensure that an economic upturn does not undermine this by leaving "green field" sites vulnerable to development as the rush for new house building occurs.

Carnforth Market Town Initiative

September 2008 saw the completion of the three and a half year Carnforth Market Town Initiative [MTI]. The programme closed at the end of September and succeeded in drawing down almost the full amount of the £1 million funding allocated for it by Northwest Development Agency.

Although most projects had been completed in the previous financial year, the programme had been granted a 6 month extension into 2008 to allow two projects to complete:

- **Carnforth Resource Centre** -Opened in December 2008 and provides a shared facility for use by the local community, school, youth and early years services, plus hot-desking business workspace.
- **Carnforth Fire Station** – An options study and design for potential redevelopment of the fire station site was completed at the end of July 2008. Due to the need for further negotiations with the Fire Service it has not been possible for the project to be taken further forward during the MTI timescale, but the project is still being pursued by CARP Ltd, the successor body to the MTI Partnership.

Carnforth MTI Partnership held its final meeting at the opening of the Resource Centre in December 2008. However, the MTI programme has left a positive legacy in the form of CARP Ltd, a not-for-profit social enterprise company which continues to operate a number of former MTI projects including Carnforth Connect, and the canal "waterbus".

Possible Future Support for Rural Service Centres

It is worth noting that Northwest Development Agency is currently looking to develop a County-wide investment strategy for Lancashire's rural key service centres, including Carnforth, with an emphasis on identifying the barriers to maximising their role in developing the rural economy. In response to a request for priority projects for inclusion in the strategy, two linked submissions are being made – one for Carnforth Fire Station site redevelopment to create high quality office and retail space in the centre of Carnforth and one for Carnforth Public Realm Improvements focusing on Carnforth Town Square adjacent to the fire station site. It is understood that NWDA will take project funding decisions based on the investment strategy during 2009/10.

Rural Development Programme for England

During the past year the City Council has taken the lead in submitting the North Lancashire Local Development Strategy for delivery of part of the Rural Development Programme for England across the Districts of Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre. The submission has now been approved by a Regional Panel through NWDA, subject to addressing a number of points raised in feedback from the Panel. RDPE funding in the submission totalled £2.5m over the period to 2013.

The Rural Development Programme for England is the national framework for delivery of the European Union's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in the period 2007-2013. The main mechanism for the delivery of the socio-economic priorities of the RDPE in the North West is the Leader approach which is based on community-led and locally based programmes. In implementing this approach, the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) introduced a process to establish Local Action Groups (LAGs), comprising a range of organisations representing a wide cross-section of rural community interests. These LAGs would take decisions on those projects and proposals from a range of delivery bodies that best contribute to the improvement of the local rural economy and which offer innovative solutions to identified local needs.

Within Lancashire three LAGs will be established including one covering the North Lancashire area and comprising the rural areas within Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre Districts. Lancaster City Council has acted as Lead Authority in developing the North Lancashire Local Development Strategy, supported by Lancashire Economic Partnership. The Strategy was approved by NWDA in December 2008. Total RDPE funding of £2.53m to 2013 will be available for North Lancashire, split between seven measures:

- Vocational training and information actions - £141,505
- Adding value to agricultural and forestry products - £660,358
- Co-operation for the development of new products - £141,505
- Diversification into non-agricultural activities - £308,393
- Support creation and development of micro enterprises - £411,191
- Encouragement of tourism - £102,798
- Basic services - £205,596

20% of the overall funding is allocated to management and administration costs, including a full-time, dedicated Rural Development Officer to support implementation of the programme. This officer will be employed by Lancashire Economic Partnership but the City Council's Economic Development Service have offered office space for the officer to use as a base, to ensure that close links are developed. The City Council is also taking the lead in establishing the North Lancashire Local Action Group and LAG Executive Group which will make decisions on project funding proposals. It is anticipated that the City Council would be represented on the LAG Executive Group. Lancashire Economic Partnership will be the accountable body for the programme and will also provide certain centralised functions.

Performance Management and Efficiency

The Planning Service has seen a significant reduction in income from fees for planning applications and building regulation submissions. To compensate for this vacant posts have been frozen in Building Control and the whole of last year's Planning Delivery Grant has been provided to offset income losses. The Service will continue to look for efficiencies in staffing levels where it can without prejudicing its ability to respond to the economic upturn when it arrives.

Managing Performance

Having achieved a 'Good' rating in the last ever round of CPA inspections, the emphasis in 2008/09 has been to consolidate and strengthen the significant improvements we have made in managing performance over recent years. All our processes and systems are regularly reviewed and in summer 2008 it was the turn of

our Performance Management Framework (PMF). The aim of the review was to ensure that we continue to monitor the delivery of all strategic and operational priorities in the most effective way.

The PMF had been praised in the 2007 CPA inspection and was working well, so the outcome was a number of small improvements to what was already a solid and functional process. Recommendations included the streamlining of paperwork and the establishment of a convention of Plain English in all monitoring reports. The PMF continues to deliver effective monitoring and a consistent focus on priorities.

The change associated with corporate improvement requires processes to manage it well. Our systems continue to be robust, well embedded and consistently applied. 'Escendency', our web based performance management tool, provides a 'picture' of performance in relation to priorities in using the most up to date available information and highlighting both under and over performance.

Managing Projects

Our bespoke corporate project management methodology is well embedded across the Council. Lancaster's Approach to Managing Projects (LAMP) was introduced in April 2007. Adoption of a standard method has developed a pool of trained and experienced project staff who can apply the method to any type or size of project proportionate to its significance to the success of the Council, its complexity and degree of risk. Through LAMP, we ensure that all intended project benefits are realised and that individual projects are delivered to time, cost and quality. Evaluation to date shows that the LAMP project is achieving its objectives. Our recent emphasis has been on improving Programme Management and this activity will continue in the coming financial year.

Partnership Performance

Increasingly, the council delivers its ambition for our communities through partnership working, so we seek to share our performance management expertise with all our partners. This was an area for future development/improvement identified in the CPA report and the coming year will see the council's ever more active engagement in the Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) PMF.

In 2008/09 the council was actively involved in the negotiation of the latest county-wide Local Area Agreement LAA). The Council plays an active role in the performance monitoring arrangements which are now in place with the County LSP to monitor local progress in achieving targets in the LAA. Data Sharing Protocols are now in place across partnerships; the MADE (multi-agency data exchange) database is a specific example of this – which helps determine priorities and improvement planning in the Community Safety Partnership.

Ensuring Data Quality

Consistent, high-quality, timely and comprehensive information is vital to delivering improved service outcomes. In the most recent audit we again scored 3 out of 4 which means 'performing well'. This tells us that KPMG, the Council's auditors, believe the measures we have put in place over recent years are robust. This ensures that the data upon which Members rely to make decisions is accurate and fit for external scrutiny.

The Council had set a target to score Level 4 for data quality by 2008. Achievement of this target was dependent upon rolling out best practice across all our partnerships, particularly the LSP. The LSP was comprehensively restructured over

the last year and the partnership's performance management arrangements were only recently agreed. This means that the earliest possible date for achieving Level 4 is 2009 and the target has been deferred accordingly.

Comparison & Value for Money

The Council continues to benchmark its activity with comparable authorities, in particular through strong links with our family group, the Exeter Benchmarking Group. This enables an exchange of knowledge and ideas to support many of the Council's improvements. We are also a corporate member of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE). Specific professional and countywide officer groups also meet regularly to discuss performance and opportunities to share best practice and efficiency options.

Other practical examples of using comparative performance data include using the Audit Commission's VFM tool, Direction of Travel and visiting other Councils to learn from best practice. These tools are used by services in both their PRT reports and also in the Star Chamber's annual VFM challenge. Value for money is central to our performance management framework and continues to drive our efficiency agenda.

Corporate Plan Priority Outcomes:

Continue to evaluate our services to ensure they are delivered in the most efficient and cost effective way.

- *Deliver service improvement targets through business plans and achieve the efficiency targets in the Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and in the Comprehensive Spending Review*

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR DAVID KERR, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR

- HOUSING STRATEGY AND PROVISION - EXCLUDING HOMELESSNESS
- ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
- HUMAN RESOURCES
- SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR



1 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Children and Young People Cabinet Liaison Group
- District Wide Tenants Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Neighbourhood Management Cabinet Liaison Group

2 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancaster District Community Safety Strategy Group
- LSP Environment Thematic Group
- LSP Health and Wellbeing Thematic Group
- LSP Safety Thematic Group
- Morecambe Bay Tobacco Control Alliance

3 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing Strategy and Provision – excluding homelessness

Environmental health

Human Resources

Support for the Voluntary Sector

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Contribute to health improvement and reduce health inequalities through both delivery of our own services and our work with partners:

- *Use the baseline year of Place Survey to track 10% difference in life expectancy between our most deprived ward and the least deprived ward.*

Reduce alcohol related violence and harm; reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour:

- *Work with the Police, Primary Care Trust and other agencies within the Community Safety Partnership to address issues around alcohol related violence and harm in line with the Alcohol Related Harm Strategy*

Increase the provision of affordable housing:

- *Provide affordable housing in accordance with the Housing and Homelessness Strategies*

Reduce sickness absence

4 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9

Human Resources

The major task for Human Resources (HR) during this year has once again been the Fair Pay project. Following the job evaluation process, moderation was completed, and the Service worked closely with Financial Services to develop a new pay and grading structure. Many possible structures were considered, resulting in possible options being considered by the Single Status Working Group, Joint Consultative Committee, and Personnel Committee and Cabinet. Once the preferred structure had been approved, employees were notified on the 26th February 2009 of their job evaluation results and proposed new pay and grading. The notification process involved a substantial amount of work for HR staff. The next stage in the process is to deal, internally, with any appeals. An appeals procedure has been agreed with the trade unions and approved by Personnel Committee.

In addition to the considerable workload demands of the Fair Pay project, the Service has continued to provide routine operational HR advice. In particular the Service has continued to support Services in reducing sickness absence, and the improvement made in previous years has been maintained. The Service has also provided HR support and advice for Williamson Park, and has provided a great deal of support for the proposed Regeneration restructuring.

The Service is also responsible for the corporate training plan, and the priority this year has been customer care training, which is being delivered to all staff throughout the Council. This has received excellent feedback.

Health and Strategic Housing

Environmental Health

The 3 year headstone safety project in Lancaster Cemetery has been completed successfully on target and within budget. The Headstones within this cemetery are now safe. The memorial safety team is to be continued (on a reduced staffing level) to undertake the testing and repair of memorials in all the other Council cemeteries and closed churchyards. Several improvements have taken place at Torrisholme Cemetery with the help of the friends group and our efforts have been rewarded with gaining a green flag award.

The service has taken part in the citizenship classes at 2 local schools concentrating on the environmental aspects of the Council's work. We have also taken part in several environment days giving pupils an opportunity to learn about subjects ranging from recycling and fly tipping to food and health and safety. These links with schools are a key part of our services contribution to the children and young people's agenda and build on our already successful home safety quiz and mission possible initiative.

New work in Carnforth and Galgate has provided a more detailed understanding of local air quality. Work has begun to prepare an air quality action plan for central

Carnforth. A new air quality management area must be declared in Galgate and this will lead to further assessment. Meanwhile work with other agencies to identify scope for tackling air quality in central Lancaster is continuing. Here it will be necessary to carry out feasibility studies on some of the medium and long-term transport solutions identified in the Faber Maunsell report. Proposals for a new air quality action plan for Lancaster are being considered by the Local Strategic Partnership, which has confirmed its support for a Local Air Quality Forum.

The food and health and safety activity achieved an award of “substantial” reassurance in a recent internal audit. This is the first time internal audit have been able to award any Council service this level of reassurance. The food safety service was also successful in obtaining grant monies to assist catering businesses comply with new regulations.

With the closure of Strategic Housing offices at Euston Road, a system of hot desking was introduced at Morecambe Town Hall. This project was completed relatively smoothly within 5 weeks thanks to the professionalism and hard work of our staff. The service is seeing the benefits of having all staff together in one building and the improved reception and interview areas at MTH provide excellent facilities for our customers.

The Gypsy and Traveller Cabinet Liaison group formed this year and has already started to provoke useful discussions on future provision for Gypsy and Travellers and has heard evidence from a national body about problems experienced by people living on private caravan sites.

All targets in the business plan have been met. The corporate plan target relating to dog related enforcement activities has been achieved this year.

Strategic Housing

Staff in Strategic Housing relocated from unsatisfactory office accommodation at Euston Road, Morecambe to Morecambe Town Hall in July 2008. The move was completed without any problems and whilst maintaining essential housing services for our customers – again only possible due to the efforts of dedicated staff. So far, we have not received any complaints from customers about moving away from the town centre location and in fact most customers report that the reception facilities and telephone answering service are much improved.

The targeted HMO project funded by the West end partnership ended on 31 March 2009. This was an immensely successful project targeting rogue landlords and improving some of the worst properties in the district. The Council worked with the police, the fire service and the local community on this project.

The housing standards team has failed to meet some of the business plan targets on improving the standards of accommodation due to a lack of capacity within this team. This problem will be exacerbated next year as the temporary funded west end HMO project came to an end in March 2009 and the funding for one post in this team is no longer available. In the absence of any funding to increase this team, a realignment of priorities has begun to match which statutory duties we can deliver with the resources available.

The disabled facilities grant service continues to face challenging times this year with the demand for this mandatory grant exceeding the available resources.

West End and Poulton Housing

The Council has been implementing its Housing Strategy by joining up a wide range of activities through its neighbourhood management, regeneration, and planning operations. It has continued to implement a capital programme in partnership with Housing Associations which overhaul and renew low quality accommodation in Poulton and the West End of Morecambe.

Through its regeneration activities, it has been dealing with the built environment which, when poor, exacerbates the effects of problem housing, and it has continued to work with the Homes and Communities Agency to bring forward a viable scheme for a housing exemplar in the West End. These activities have been supported by the emergence of the newly adopted Local Development Framework for the district which sets the scene for new housing growth and will steer investment into the most sustainable locations, and towards meeting the right needs for the district when the economic upturn occurs.

Council Housing Services

2008/2009 has been a challenging but productive year for Council Housing Services.

Asset Management Including Repairs and Maintenance

The independent stock condition survey has confirmed that we remain a high performer in relation to the Government's standards for Decent Homes. Since the previous stock condition survey the "decency" bar has been raised, and it is against these new higher standards that the latest stock condition survey has highlighted that only 1% of our housing stock does not meet the new Decency standard. Any necessary adjustments to our capital and planned maintenance programmes will be made to bring all the housing stock back into decency.

Approximately £3.5 million was committed to this years capital programme. All projects within the 2008/2009 programme have been let, and are scheduled for completion within the year.

The Service is seeking a partner to improve the delivery of the capital and planned maintenance programme. The exercise to indentify a partner has had to be deferred, and the partnership working arrangements is to be re-tendered with a view to establishing the partnership from April 2010.

We continue to achieve good performance on responsive repairs but performance is not as good as we had hoped for. The Service had set challenging targets for 2008/2009 based on a very good performance out-turn in 2007/2008 but we have seen increasing demands for repairs, and also increasing volumes of work having to be undertaken prior to being able to relet properties.

The procurement of a maintenance partner will enable us to address some of these resource issues.

Tenant satisfaction with the repairs service has remained high. 98% of tenants who have had a repair undertaken have been satisfied with the completed repair.

Income Management

The current economic climate is having an effect on rent collection. The percentage of tenants getting into serious arrears has increased from 2.88% to 3.3%. However

the overall collection rate remains high with the proportion of rent collected being 97.8% at the end of period Q3. This collection rate gives us a current ranking of 4th amongst 20 other housing providers in the NW.

To tackle the issue of increasing serious rent arrears the Service, alongside the CABs held three “Credit Crunch Roadshows” earlier in the year targeting the estates with the highest levels of rent arrears. The feedback from these “Roadshows” was very positive and further ones are planned. In addition the CABs have also expressed an interest in establishing a surgery within the council housing office at Cable Street.

The Service has also now signed up to “Possession Claims Online”. This means that we can make and manage our court applications online. This brings efficiency and savings in both time and money.

Allocation & Lettings

We currently have 1583 active application for housing on the housing register, and 491 tenants requesting a transfer. This year to date we have housed 300 households from the both the housing register and the transfer register. We are currently receiving approximately 40 new housing applications a month which is an increase on the situation last year. One of the things we are finding is that we a housing increasing numbers of vulnerable people with support needs.

Tenancy & Estate Management

This year saw the introduction of a new tenancy agreement. We wanted to make sure that the tenancy agreement is easy to read and to understand. We also wanted to make sure that the tenancy agreement clearly illustrates the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and those of the council. The agreement was introduced following extensive consultation and has been well received.

Tenancy and estate management work remains challenging and we have found that we have to take increasing action to tackle serious issues around breach of tenancies using the full toolkit of options open to us. Our Legal Services have been very supportive of us enabling us to find solutions to some very difficult situations. The Service is fully engaged with other agencies and plays a full part in the Community Safety Partnership including the Multi-Agency Partnership Team (MAPs), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (the main aim of the MARAC is to support the highest risk victims of domestic abuse in their area) and the Prolific and other Priority Offenders Group (PPO).

Supported Housing

Through the changes brought about through Supporting People we are a provider of housing support and the support is commissioned by Lancashire Supporting People.

This year saw the Service being awarded a steady state contract to provide housing related support in our sheltered housing schemes, and also community alarms. We are also Lancashire County Council’s preferred partner for providing telecare services within the district – telecare is an extended form of the community alarm service we already provide.

As part of a response to Supporting People and to provide a higher level of service to sheltered housing scheme tenants we have established a pilot where we have grouped three sheltered housing schemes where the scheme managers support each other and provide mutual cover when on leave providing a higher level of

contact with tenants than we could previously support. Approval has been given to role out this concept across our sheltered housing schemes.

Tenant Involvement

2009 has seen the establishment by the Government of a new regulatory regime for social housing with the creation of the Tenant Services Agency (TSA). The TSA has been created to regulate the whole of the social housing sector and to ensure that tenants are at the heart of setting service standards. As part of the establishment of the TSA we have been chosen as a “path finding” authority in tenant involvement. This work will form part of something that is called a “National Conversation” that the TSA is undertaking to establish the new regulatory regime and standards for social housing.

Throughout this last year we have continued to improve the opportunities for involvement with tenants. August 2008 saw an event called the “Tenant’s Den” where we visited all our estates across the district to seek ideas for environmental improvements and small local projects. Shelter housing tenants were assisted in making a successful bid to Tesco and were awarded £1300 to purchase laptops for their schemes. This was done through an online grant finding package called “Grantfinder” which is being used to help all our tenant groups access funding. Other events that have been organised this year include a very successful tenants’ conference, we have had our annual garden competition which continues to attract a high number of entries, and we have also had two “chipping and neutering” events held jointly with Health & Strategic Housing and the RSPCA to promote responsible dog ownership.

Democratic Services – Grants to Voluntary Organisations – Activity In 2008/09

A total of 37 voluntary organisations were helped by the Council in 2008 with small grants from £100 to £500 which were used for a wide range of things – renovation of musical instruments for a Youth Band, a Christmas Party for pensioners, cricket equipment, training for helpers at a swimming club and monthly coffee mornings for the over 60’s to name but a few.

With regard to the larger grants, progress has been made during 2008 with identifying the relevant Service Heads to provide closer links with voluntary organisations funded by the City Council in an effort to improve the monitoring of Service Level Agreements and to ensure that SLAs are more closely aligned to the Council’s priority needs. The requirement to find last minute savings as part of this year’s budget exercise will be carried forward into a more considered review of funding levels and SLAs for the future.

5 CONCLUSION

Finally, in presenting my annual report, I wish to thank all employees in the service areas within my portfolio who have provided me with support throughout the year and who provide such a good service on behalf of the Council.

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EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

COUNCILLOR JANE FLETCHER, CABINET MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARTS, MUSEUMS, LEISURE, SPORT AND YOUNG PEOPLE



1 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Children and Young People Cabinet Liaison Group

2 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan
- Lancaster University Public Arts Strategy Committee
- LSP Children and Young People Thematic Group
- Museums Advisory Panel
- Cycling Demonstration Town Board

3 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

Arts
Museums
Leisure
Sport
Young People

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

Contribute to health improvement and reduce health inequalities through both delivery of our own services and our work with partners:

- *Improve the quality of activity for children and young people and raise the standards of delivery of PE and out of hours opportunities across the district.*

Work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated:

- *Implement the Children and Young People Strategic Plan.*

4 PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008/9

Headline Issues for Cultural Services

Quarter 1:-

- Completion of pool changing rooms refurbishment
- Appointment of 2 new Play Rangers
- Successful school holidays arts and leisure activity programmes
- Alan Dix of "509 Arts" appointed to assist in the production of a new district wide Arts Strategy

Quarter 2:-

- Successful summer playscheme programme
- Volunteer "gardener" initiative launched for Happy Mount Park
- Dome, Platform and Key Cultural Partners (Dukes, Litfest, Storey, More Music and LUDUS) all record successful spring/summer programmes, whilst the Festivals & Events section enjoy a successful Festival and Events Programme – including "We do like to be beside the Seaside" festival , as well as assisted events such as the Sandcastle Festival and the Kite Festival.

Quarter 3:-

- Lancaster identified as the only district in Lancashire to record "significant" increase in sports and physical activity participation – Sport England "Active People 2" survey
 - Adult participation in sport – increased by 6.2%
 - Club Membership – increased by 5.1%
 - Organised Competition – increased by 5.2%
- Council adopt the free swimming for the over 60's from April 2009 at Salt Ayre Sports Centre and the 3 Community Pools

Children and Young People

This is the first year of working to the Children and Young People Strategic Plan that was approved by Cabinet in January 2008. The Action Plan for 2008/09 focuses on developing priorities specified in the Strategic Plan, described and monitored by working to the following 5 aims:

1. To Ensure that Lancaster City Council Fulfils its Duty to Co-Operate Under The Children Act 2004

The Children and Young People Manager has participated in district, county and regional groups in order to be able to advise and inform services and members of new developments and requirement; ensuring that local perspectives are included in county work and that improvements are made in council run/funded provision.

- **Every Child Matters (ECM) Leads Group** – representatives from the 12 District/Borough Councils in Lancashire meet to ensure that tier 2 councils are working coherently within the new Children’s Trusts, are all aware of new developments/legislation, have the opportunity of offering support by sharing information and best practice examples.
- **Involving Children and Young People Steering Group** – a relatively new countywide group set up to embed the Lancashire Children and Young People’s Charter in all organisations across the county. (More information regarding this later in Youth Engagement section) The Children and Young People Manager represents the council and also the other district councils on this group.
- The C&YP Manager sits in the **Lancaster District Children’s Trust** and was involved in organising the launch of the Trust in January 2009 and led a task and finish group on assessing the levels of engagement/participation across the district. The council is the lead organisation for priority *‘To increase the number of cultural and leisure opportunities for children and young people in order to increase their participation in positive activities’*

The **Children and Young People Officer Group** is a cross service group that has been made up from the ‘old’ ECM officer group and safeguarding group in the council. It was decided that it was more effective to have one group rather than duplicating some issues and having more than one representative from services. It has been further agreed that there will be an ‘executive group’ made up of service representatives who have the most contact or involvement with children and young people.

All services have a Children and Young People officer who has the responsibility of cascading information to their services and bringing issues back to the group and/or the Children and Young People team.

Work is continuing to ensure that services acknowledge the work they do with children and young people in their service business plans.

In order to monitor and bench mark the amount of work and the variety of work that different services do it is hoped to introduce a basic ‘monitoring form’. This will provide the council with consistency and a comprehensive set of data.

In addition to the information to services through the officer group there has been an article in News ‘n’ Views in October 2008 about the work done on the Local Democracy Campaign, an article in First Brief and information sessions delivered to the Consultation Champions group and Council Housing staff and a training session for members.

The Children and Young People page on the intranet has been reviewed and renewed with links to minutes and external websites included. The page on the council’s website has also been revamped to include more information. This is regularly up-dated.

2. To Ensure the Council Fulfils its Duty in Safeguarding and Contributing to the Wellbeing of Children and Young People

Safeguarding children and young people continues to be a priority for the council. Child protection training sessions have been offered, but there has been a low uptake to the corporate training. A reminder will go to services for this EDPA round.

The summer play-schemes had information packs and leaflets at each venue (funded by C&YP budget) alongside internal training for the play leaders

The council's current Child Protection Policy was used as an example of good practice through a presentation made to the ECM Leads group by the Children and Young People Manager. It was subsequently used to form the basis of Hyndburn's policy.

Under current legislation 'safeguarding' includes more than 'child protection'. It has a wider remit in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and using preventative measures as well as interventions. Nationally there is a new framework that all organisations need to sign up to – **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**. The council was the first district council in county to sign up to the CAF.

The CAF uses Lancashire Continuum of Need to indicate the level of support a child and/or family will require. Using the CAF referral system has replaced the system that staff have been using for a long time. Therefore training sessions have been organised by the Children and Young People Team for all relevant services delivered by the locality CAF Support Officer

A new **Safeguarding Children Policy and Guidance** document has been drafted and sent to all council services and external colleagues for consultation. This new policy will safeguard staff as well as children and young people by giving clear guidance on behaviour and code of conduct, training and recruitment and selection guidance. Children and young people will benefit from the addition of an anti-bullying and positive behaviour guidance.

The council has not had consistency in processes or procedures for young people who are short work experience placements. This new policy provides clear guidance on how to organise and operate a safe experience for young people.

The new child protection and CAF processes are clearly laid out for staff to follow. The processes have changed considerably since the previous Child Protection Policy was written, so it was important that this new policy reflected the most up to date systems.

3. To Develop Local Democracy Activities

The Children and Young People Manager has taken the responsibility for co-ordinating the Local Democracy activities that take place during October. A group of officers from services who deliver the activities met to discuss and plan activities for 2008. Evaluation forms for participants are now used for each event with the results collated and used to inform improvements to the activities.

It was agreed that in future years the council would provide activities throughout the year rather than just during the National Democracy Week, having a **Local Democracy Campaign**. A 'menu' of activities and opportunities will be devised and go to Business Committee.

New banners for displays have been bought, giving a corporate feel to all Local Democracy publicity and information.

The 'Mock Council' event at Morecambe Town Hall was enjoyed by 28 year 7 pupils from Morecambe High School and 28 pupils from Heysham High School. This is the first year that secondary age pupils have participated.

There were two days of activities based on 'environment' and the roles of council services attended by year 6 pupils from four primary schools in the district – 29 from

Moorside Primary, 42 from Bolton-le-Sands Primary, 16 from St Bernadette's Catholic primary and 7 from Stepping Stones School.

New this year was a 'Working for the Council' session where 11 year 10 pupils from Skerton High School learnt about application forms, interview techniques and the variety of opportunities in the council.

4. To Develop a Youth Engagement Strategy (YES)

Children and young people's involvement in the planning, design and delivery of services is not only expected but essential in ensuring that services meet their needs and expectations and those of their families

Currently we do not have any guidelines, protocols or cohesion in how or if we involve children and young people in any of our services. There are a number of factors that need consideration when deciding what is needed, hence a comprehensive 'Youth Engagement Strategy' will provide clarity in the who, why, what and how of involving children and young people.

As a council we need to have a consistency and quality in our approaches to involving children and young people meaningfully. This is not to say that everyone/every service has to do everything the same way, quite the opposite. By developing a shared understanding of what 'engagement', 'involvement', 'participation' means we can then move onto developing a menu of opportunities for children and young people's involvement.

Special Council in October 2008 provided the platform for starting the process of developing such a strategy.

There were 37 young people from 12 secondary schools, colleges and organisations participating in the day which was based on 'localising' the '**Lancashire Children and Young People's Charter**' a document written by young people describing how services should engage with children and young people to make it possible for them to have meaningful participation.

The aim of the day was '*To provide a forum for dialogue between elected members and young people from across the district. It is envisaged that this will be the beginning of regular exchanges of views and ideas.*'

The evaluations of young people, facilitators and members will provide the framework for the YES. This will be going to consultation in April 2009.

A DVD of the day's events will be available for organisations, schools, participants, services and members before the end of March 2009.

5. To Improve Access and Take up of Positive Activities, Including Sports, Cultural and Leisure Activities

Please see information from Cultural Services.

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