



**LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL**  
*Promoting City, Coast & Countryside*

# **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

**June 2010**

## **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

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## **Foreword from the Leader of Council and Chairman of Cabinet**



I am pleased to present the Executive Annual Report for 2009/10.

This year has been a challenging year for all those involved in the public sector. Major restructuring internally and tough decisions on service provision have provided this Council with a good basis on which to move forward for future years.

Each Cabinet Member has areas of special responsibility and the following reports show the progress and achievement of goals in each of these individual portfolio areas. Each Cabinet member has worked hard in their portfolio in often, difficult circumstances. What they all have in common is a desire to make this District a better place for all the

people who live here. I would like to thank them for their contribution this year. We are a Cabinet of 5 different political groups and whilst we may not always agree we have worked together in a professional manner for the good of the District. Decisions have been made that provide a clear message on where we wish to go. Respect is earned not given automatically and through their work and wisdom this year all members of the Cabinet have my respect for what they have done and achieved and their desire to do more for the people of the District.

I also want to thank the officers who have supported the Cabinet through out the year. The political make up of this authority cannot make it always an easy place to work. However, our officers are professional, experienced and provide good advice to all members of the Cabinet. More over they do so in a way that makes it a pleasure to work with them. This is true at all levels of our authority. I have visited some of our services during this last year – and been very impressed by all I have seen. We also introduced a staff suggestion scheme and it is good to see how our staff want to improve the efficiency and service this council provides.

I hope that you enjoy reading this year's report.

Cllr Stuart Langhorn

## **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, set out in their entry in the following report.

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### Executive Decisions

The table below shows the executive decisions that were taken from May 2009 to April 2010. Please note, these figures include decisions where a Member was involved in the decision jointly with another Member or, in the case of urgent business, where the Member was consulted by the Chief Executive.

Decisions moved in the name of <b>Councillor</b> (Portfolio)	Executive Decisions				
	Key Decision taken at Cabinet	Non-key decision taken at Cabinet	Individual Cabinet Member Decision	Urgent Business Decision	
Stuart <b>Langhorn</b> (Leader)	6	14	4	4	28
Evelyn <b>Archer</b> (The Economy)	11	3	1	1	16
June <b>Ashworth</b> (Children and Young People)	6	3	2	1	12
Jon <b>Barry</b> (The Environment)	5	5	4	0	14
Eileen <b>Blamire</b> (Safety)	5	0	3	0	8
Abbott <b>Bryning</b> (Education, Skills and Opportunities)	4	0	0	0	4
Jane <b>Fletcher</b> (Valuing People)	2	0	4	0	6
David <b>Kerr</b> (Health and Wellbeing)	7	3	3	0	13
Roger <b>Mace</b> - until 3 March 2010 (Internal Affairs)	4	5	11	1	21
Malcolm <b>Thomas</b> - until 1 March 2010 (Finance)	29	17	4	2	52
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>50</b>			

## **Councillor Evelyn Archer: Portfolio Holder for The Economy**

(Cabinet Member until 19 April 2010)



### **1. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- Business Cabinet Liaison Group (formerly two groups, the Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group and the Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group)

### **2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- British Resorts Association
- Lancashire Economic Partnership
- Lancashire Rural Affairs Forum
- Local Government Association Tourism Forum
- North Lancashire Local Action Group Executive Group
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Economy Thematic Group

### **3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

#### **Council Service Oversight:-**

Economic Development and Tourism

#### **Links to Corporate Plan Key Actions 1.1 and 1.2:-**

- 1.1 Develop and implement with partner organisations a sustainable economic regeneration programme for the District based upon the LDLSP Economy Thematic Group Economy Action Plan and our own Tourism Strategy.

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1.2 Complete Economic Investment Strategy by developing projects around each of the following 5 Vision Themes and apply for funding support for each.

- Knowledge Economy
- Heysham to M6 Employment Corridor
- Re-inventing Morecambe
- Lancaster City and Riverside
- Carnforth Northern Gateway

**Links to LDLSP Priority 2** - *Increase the economic opportunity in the whole district, facilitate access to our natural and built up environment and implement an integrated transport solution to bring the major urban centres in the district together.*

## **4. Progress made during 2009/10**

### **Economy Portfolio**

In 2009/10 what will be the new Regeneration and Policy Service absorbed the regeneration delivery team from economic development into its establishment and key projects are now aligned directly to delivery of the adopted Local Development Framework. Under the management of the new service staff are implementing key projects in the regeneration framework including capital schemes in Morecambe's West End Master Plan including a review of the Chatsworth Gardens housing exemplar scheme, and the Lancaster Science Park project.

Investigative work continues to try and persuade South Lakeland and Barrow Council's of the benefits of cross boundary working to further the objectives of the spatial planning process and work, among other things towards a unified tourism brand for Morecambe Bay.

A major contribution which the district could make to a Morecambe Bay brand could be improving Lancaster's Cultural Heritage offer and finding new uses for key buildings in Morecambe under a proposed second Townscape Heritage Project for Morecambe. Despite the disappointment of not obtaining Sea change funding to restore the Winter Gardens, the delivery team will continue to help investigate options for intervention to bring the building back into viable use.

Economic development staff now to be absorbed into the new service have been working with Lancashire economic Partnership to deliver a programme of rural development initiatives, and with other funding partners such as the North West Development Agency to deliver business support and rent grant schemes to help local businesses through these turbulent economic times.

Major regeneration projects at Luneside East and on Morecambe Promenade continue to be tackled by the partnerships between private sector developers and funding agencies and every effort has been made in the last year to ensure that the schemes are

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not abandoned to the economic recession and are available for new investment when the recovery comes.

The Heysham /M6 Link project moves towards the land acquisition stage and is now providing opportunities to examine investment in complementary transport measures for the urban area, and development opportunities for employment sites who's potential will be unlocked by the road.

The Secretary of States decision on the Canal Corridor North scheme now gives greater certainty to the City Council about the scheme and gives clear guidance on how to move forward when conditions are right to redesign it.

### **Lancaster Science Park**

The development of Lancaster Science Park as a focus for development of the District's "knowledge economy" is a key priority for the City Council and also for other regional partners including Northwest Development Agency. The project will support the development and growth of new, technology based businesses, stimulate spin-out of jobs from Lancaster University, and help create high level new jobs to allow university graduates to stay and work in the district.

Over the last year two major milestones have been achieved in moving this project forward. Firstly, we have successfully obtained outline planning consent for the development of the science park, following lengthy and complex negotiations with the County Council (as highways authority) and the Highways Agency to agree measures to alleviate potential off-site traffic congestion at Galgate.

Secondly, following the grant of planning permission, the City Council has now been able to completed negotiations to purchase the site, funded by Northwest Development Agency, and it is now in our ownership.

The next step is to secure funding for the first phase of development, which would comprise a new site access and construction of a 4000 square metre Innovation Centre, from Northwest Development Agency.

### **Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy**

Lancaster District has a tremendous range of heritage assets, covering 2000 years of history from roman times in Lancaster, through the Vikings and Saxons at Heysham Head and the Georgian quayside of St George's Quay, to the 20th Century Art Deco Midland Hotel in Morecambe.

It has also been recognised for some time that all these assets represent a major opportunity to do much more to draw in visitors and tourists to our area. Development of the District's heritage offer is now being set out as one of the key objectives for the new

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Lancashire economic strategy and as part of the emerging Multi-Area Agreement for mid-Lancs.

Over the last year Council officers have been working closely with Northwest Development Agency and Lancaster District LSP to secure funding for an important new piece of work to address these issues. Specialist heritage and tourism consultants have now been appointed and are currently in the process of developing a new cultural heritage strategy for the district which will provide an action plan for future work by the City Council and its partners. The study should be completed around May of this year.

### **Storey Creative Industries Centre**

2009/10 saw the completion of the refurbishment of the Storey Institute and its reopening to the public as a multi-purpose creative industries centre. The new centre provides managed workspace for creative industry businesses, which has proved extremely popular despite the economic recession and has already achieved an occupancy level of over 75%, after just 9 months, which is above original targets.

Other facilities include a new bar and restaurant, a new state of the art auditorium which is being used by Lancaster LitFest and also for hosting a wide range of events and small conferences, a refurbished main Gallery and lecture theatre, and the new Lancaster Visitor Information Centre.

The restored building is being managed and operated by a specially created and independent, not-for-profit company, Storey CIC Ltd, which has brought together a good range of individuals with extensive skills and relevant experience, all putting in their time and energies on a voluntary basis.

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT**

### **Rent Grant Scheme**

LSP funding of £40,000 was secured for the city council's Rent Grant Scheme at the beginning of the year enabling it to be maintained at least to March 2011. The Scheme offers start up and early stage businesses grants of 50% (up to £2,000) of the first years rent on new property leases. During 2009/10 17 businesses have been assisted, with grants totalling £19,235 (to the beginning of March 2010). 23 jobs were created as a result of the projects supported. These figures include those cases where grant payments were made in 2009/10 from offers made in the previous year.

### **Business Counselling**

The Intensive Start Up contract, providing advice to start up and early stage businesses, was awarded to Enterprise4All and the service was formally launched later than anticipated in late 2009 with an office base established in the Storey Creative Industries Centre. Core funding for the service is provided by NWDA with a substantial proportion of European Regional Development Fund support and is supplemented by Lancashire County Council funding under a co-funding agreement with NWDA. In common with

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many other areas in the North West, the late start has meant that first year targets related to business starts have not been met as there is a time lag from initial enquiry to actual start but activity levels towards the end of the year had picked up.

### **Business enquiries**

During the year to early March 2010, the Business Development Team in the Economic Development & Tourism Service had handled a total of 414 enquiries, 223 of which were property related and 104 finance related

### **Business Support Network**

The city council, through the Business Development Team, has continued to lead the District Business Support Network which brings together, on a monthly basis, all business support organisations who deliver services in the district and including some who are regionally based such as Business Link. This has served to develop relationships among the advisers, improving referrals to ensure local businesses have access to the support they need from the most appropriate organisations. The Network has been acknowledged as an example of good practice. The annual Business Advice Night, supported by Business Link and Lancashire County Council, was held in April 2009 and preparations are currently underway for the 2010 Advice Night on 14<sup>th</sup> April. A County Council 'Find Your Way' event, supported by the city council, was held in Morecambe in November 2009.

## **RURAL**

### **Rural Development Programme for England**

Following the inaugural meeting of the North Lancashire Local Action Group at the beginning of April 2009 the Executive Group was established and included city council representation through the Cabinet Member, with officer support from the Economic Development & Tourism Service. This £2.5m programme is now being implemented across the rural areas of Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre Districts and includes grant funds for rural businesses and projects. A total of at least 31 expressions of interest for projects have been received by the LAG Development Officer, 15 of which are for projects in Lancaster District. A total of four projects have been approved including two in Lancaster District.

### **Carnforth Fire Station Redevelopment**

As part of the Lancashire Rural Growth Study commissioned by NWDA to develop an investment strategy for the County's rural areas, and especially the key service centres, a proposal was submitted for the redevelopment of Carnforth Fire Station as managed workspace. This project was accorded a high priority in the study report and initial discussions have been held with Lancashire Economic Partnership with a view to taking the project forward. Some initial feedback is awaited from NWDA regarding the prospects for funding.

## **Tourism**

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The Tourism Team has been busy during 2009/10 implementing changes to the marketing of the district and to the operation of the Visitor Information Centres. The new Lancaster VIC in The Storey opened in March 2009 and had a difficult first couple of months while building work was completed around them but with the opening of the NICE café/bar and restaurant and with the provision of banners and external signage, visitor numbers have improved. During 2009/10, Morecambe VIC handled 91,600 enquiries and Lancaster VIC handled 64,700. In addition the tourism website had 172,707 unique visits, allowing the production of the main Accommodation Guide to be reduced from 65,000 to 45,000 for 2010. The updated tourism website was re-launched on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2010, to mark the end of British Tourism Week and the first anniversary of Lancaster VIC moving into The Storey.

During 2009 the Morecambe VIC opened on additional spring and autumn Sundays as a trial period. As a result of assessing the business case for additional Sunday opening, the Morecambe VIC will remain open for 7 days per week through the 6 summer months of 2010 and will revert to 6 day per week opening for the 6 winter months of the year. The Partnership Agreement with Lancashire county Council for the operation of Morecambe VIC has been renewed for 2010/11. In Lancaster VIC, the opening hours have been extended, at no additional cost, as a result of collaborative work with The Storey.

For 2010 the marketing publications have been redesigned and the Accommodation Guide links the themes used by the Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board to the local destinations. They are also reflected in the exhibition panels and in the comprehensive Visitor Guide which was launched in time for Easter. This new publication brings together a number of different attractions and events publications and by using an A5 format is designed to be more user-friendly. The Group Travel Guide was launched at the Great Days Out Fair in mid February.

The Tourism team also appointed an assistant through the Future Jobs Fund to help with data input for a period of 6 months and this post will be filled until the end of September, 2010. Other staff changes included the early retirement of the Tourism Manager as a result of service restructuring.

## **Councillor June Ashworth: Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People**



### **1. Introduction**

This is my first annual report to council in respect of my portfolio responsibilities set out below. In undertaking my duties, I have enjoyed being part of the Cabinet under the leadership of Cllr Stuart Langhorn and was pleased to accept the responsibilities attached to my portfolio when approached by the Leader. For the vast majority of the year, I believe that the Cabinet has worked very well together, ably lead by Stuart Langhorn and I would wish to thank him, my cabinet colleagues and council officers for all their support and advice throughout the year.

Set out below is a summary of the achievements and progress that have been made throughout the year in what has been a very challenging one for the services within my portfolio.

### **2. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet

### **3. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- Childrens Trust Partnership Lancaster District
- Lancaster University Public Arts Strategy Committee
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Children and Young People Thematic Group
- Museums Advisory Panel
- North West Rural Affairs Forum (from 16 March 2010)

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### 4. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

#### Council Service Oversight:-

##### Cultural Services

- Arts
- Museums
- Leisure
- Sport

##### Corporate Strategy

- Children & Young People

#### Links to Corporate Plan Key Actions 4.3, 5.2, 5.5, and 7.3:-

- Implement Sports and Arts Project (works with targeted young people to divert them away from crime through free access to sports and arts facilities).

5.2 Maintain children and young people's participation in sports and physical activities.

5.5 Implement Sports and Physical Activities Alliance (SPAA) projects.

7.3 Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Children and Young People Thematic Group Action Plan – implement Lancaster City Council's own C&YP action plan and maintain the range of opportunities for children and young people to take part in positive activities.

#### Links to LDLSP

**Priority 1** – *To increase the number of parents that received guidance and support in the district*

**Priority 2** – *increase the life chances, opportunities and outcomes for children and young people, allowing them to play a full and active part in the life of Lancaster District.*

### 5. Progress made during 2009/10

#### Headline Achievements/Actions for Cultural Services

April –June

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- Draft Action Plan for **the Promoting Positive Activities for Young People** prepared and sent for endorsement between City and County relevant portfolio holders via LDLSP Thematic Group.
- Successful programme of **Children and Young Peoples Holiday Activity Programmes** during the Easter and May school holidays.
- The **Sports and Arts Project** (externally funded) begun. Includes a range of delivery partners including Morecambe Football Club, YMCA, Marsh Community Centre, Ridge Community Centre, the Dukes Theatre, More Music and Regent Park Studios. Programmes aimed at “diversionary” activities, supported by the Police, Youth Offending Team, and Lancashire Young Peoples Service etc. During April to June 2009 the project engaged with 237 young people at risk from offending (70 females & 167 males).
- **Big Lottery Park Project** – An externally funded (£307,429.53), three year programme linked to the District’s Play Strategy. The funding supports two projects; **Adventure Out (Play Rangers)** and **Natural Adventure**. The Play Ranger Project exceeded the participation target for the project (the Play Rangers have provided over 1750 places for local children). The Natural Adventure is an exemplar project exploring the concept and benefits of offering natural play areas within the district. Initial consultation undertaken to inform the first draft design. The consultation involved a drop-in session in Happy Mount Park with treasure hunt, den building and play ranger activities, which was attended by approximately 40 children and young people. In addition a visit to Grizedale was organised with 57 students from Morecambe High School and a small group from Beaumont college attending

### July –September

Throughout the summer and school holidays, a whole range of activities took place that contributed positively to achieving the objectives and priorities outlined in section 4 above.

- **Sport and Physical Activity Alliance (SPAA)**  
The aim of the SPAA project is to increase the number of new people participating in sport and physical activity over a 3 year period. As a consequence, a number of specific targets have been agreed with the funders and projects are now taking place to help achieve these targets.  
In particular the projects within this Alliance have been developed in partnership with a number of local organisations and are starting to achieve some outstanding successes in increased numbers participating in physical activity, namely:-

Firstly the **Community Activity Programme (CAP)**. CAP consists of a number of smaller projects e.g. YMCA Project, Regent Park Studios Project, Exercise Referral Scheme, Dance Project and Diversionary Sports & Arts Project (DSAP). The DSAP has a range of partners including the Dukes Theatre, More Music, Marsh Community Centre, Ridge Community Centre, Morecambe Football Club

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and the Police. The second of these projects is **Hit 4 Six**, which is a cricket project lead by Lancashire Cricket Board (LCB).

Whilst some of the CAP projects began in January 2009, the vast majority were scheduled throughout the summer with the final Dance projects taking place in October 2009. The Hit 4 Six projects commenced on 17th July 2009 and ran throughout the school holidays and beyond.

The funding for these projects totals around £650,000 and to date. The City Council and its “partners” have engaged with 550 new participants, some of which are “young people at risk” and others are adults referred from GPs. Many of these projects took place in priority areas throughout the district such as the West End of Morecambe, the Marsh, Ridge and Newton estates, Skerton and Poulton.

### **October to Date**

- Since October, some 1114 adults have participated in regular sport and physical activity, 12 new coaches have been trained, and 23 new volunteers are working with them within this programme. In addition there have been 87 health referrals and council officers have engaged with 472 young people at risk from offending. This 3 year externally funded programme has attracted financing from a range of sources including Sport England's Community Investment Fund, the North Lancashire Primary Care Trust, Older People's Partnership, Arts Council and Lancaster Local Strategic Partnership. The Police recognise the positive contribution that the Sports and Arts Diversionary Project is making in addressing anti social behaviour - anti social behaviour has fallen by around 21% across the district and up to 40% in some specific wards/areas where activities provided by this project have been provided.
- SPAA - Hit for Six – This part of the Programme has seen 341 young people participate in cricket since it commenced in July 2009. Again, mainly externally funded via the Lancashire Cricket Board, Sport England's Community Investment Fund, Heysham High School and Lancaster, Morecambe and District Cricket Development Group.

### **Headline Achievements/Actions for Corporate Strategy- Children & Young People**

This has been a challenging year for the Children and Young People's Team in Corporate Strategy, who continued to deliver against key objectives in spite of the long-term sickness and eventual departure of the Children and Young People's Manager. There has been no officer in post since July 2009 and the vacancy is yet to be filled.

However, this presented an opportunity to re-focus the activity of the post. The Corporate Director (Regeneration) is currently negotiating new working and funding arrangements with the County Council which will provide enhanced officer support within the council as well as strengthened structures around both the Lancaster District Children's Trust, and the LSP.

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The part time CYP Assistant is to be congratulated for maintaining impetus during this difficult time, maintaining key communications channels with all council services ensuring essential data is shared and enquiries from the general public, partners and council colleagues are dealt with. The CYP Team continues to service and support the CYP Lancaster District Multi-Agency forum, joining up with partner activities across the district.

Internally, the Children and Young People Officer Group was re-branded as the C&YP Executive Group in March 2009 following requests from some services with little involvement in providing services to, or engaging with C&YP.

The achievements of the C&YP Team over the last year can be summarised as follows:-

### **Safeguarding and Child Protection –**

The Child Protection Policy has been revised; its remit extended and is now entitled the 'Safeguarding Children Policy and Guidance'. It has within it information to assist services with all aspects relating to Children and Young People, including the Common Assessment Framework, Work Experience Good Practise and Bullying.

The Safeguarding Children Policy is available to view on the intranet and the internet. A revised pocket guide had been issued to all staff who have contact with Children and Young People and a new poster was designed to alert staff to safeguarding, the policy, and who their service responsible officer is.

Safeguarding Training is available through the Corporate Training Programme and although uptake has again been low, a reminder will go to services for this prior to the next round of staff Employee Development & Performance Appraisals in April. Packs were again provided for Summer Play venues and the play-scheme workers received internal training prior to the schemes commencing.

### **Careers Fair –**

In October 2009 the Lancaster District 14-19 Partnership organised a Careers Fair which was hosted at Lancaster Town Hall, this event covered three days and was aimed at informing Year 9 students about the range of careers available to help them make their future choices.

The council stand was eye catching and popular with visitors and was staffed on a rota basis by a range of officers from across the council and featured information on job profiles that had featured in Your District Matters earlier in the year along with other interesting profiles, facts and photographs to showcase the council provided by Health & Strategic Housing and Cultural Services. The display demonstrated the wide variety of careers (in excess of 300 different job roles) available at the Council.

A 'Tools of the Trade' quiz was put together to help encourage the pupils to spend time on our stall and find out more about what we do. There were an amazing 318 entries and we reached in excess of 450 students during the course of the event.

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### **Local Democracy Campaign –**

Local Democracy Week was held in October 2009. This gave young people the opportunity to become involved with their local council. The programme included a full days Pupil Power Event at Lancaster Town Hall, this was attended by 100 children from 3 local primary schools. Three sessions rotated which included Pupil Power Game; Town Hall Tour where the children met the Mayor in the Mayor's Parlour and a visit to the old police cells, and a new workshop this year – Climate Change Challenge. The play rangers also attended and did an energising session during the lunch break, the enthusiasm and excitement of the children as they participated was an inspiring sight.

During the week, staff from Health & Strategic Housing visited Nether Kellet Primary School and did an outreach session with pupils in years 5 and 6. The children were introduced to different aspects of Environmental Health, beginning with a health and safety session and a quiz. Various items from round the home including door closers, circuit breakers and medicine bottles were brought in to illustrate what dangers they can cause and to explain how some of the safety aids worked. A session with Dillon the resident Dog and a Pest Control Officer talked about pest control; through this the children are discouraged to drop litter, as the consequences are an increase in the rodent population. A session on washing hands was then led by food inspectors; this was particularly relevant due to the swine flu outbreak. Using an ultraviolet light the children were able to see how clean their hands were after washing. During the afternoon the children played Pupil Power, deciding how to spend their £15million budget on council services.

The week finished off with a fun filled day in the form of a Mock Council event took place at Morecambe Town Hall on Friday. Council Members stood for political parties such as 'More Sport', 'Dinosaurs' and 'Christmas Everyday'. Pupils from Morecambe Bay and Sandylands Primary Schools attended the event and took part in the mock election, listening to the Councillors promoting their parties, each child was issued with a ballot paper which they marked inside a polling booth and posted into the ballot box this giving them the chance to experience the democratic process.

Thanks go to those elected Members that supported these events – but more help and support is always appreciated and I would urge colleagues who have not yet experienced this event to get involved next year!

### **Vetting and Barring Scheme and Independent Safeguarding Authority (VBS & ISA)**

The VBS & ISA was rolled out within the council in October 2009 and will eventually replace the existing Criminal Records Bureau (CRB's) disclosures. The ISA registration will become mandatory in November 2010 for all new employees working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults and over the next 4 years, existing staff will need to be registered. This will have a significant cost to the authority and will need to be considered in future years budget exercises, but it is a government requirement and may yet attract some additional funding. Services have been made aware of their obligations and Human Resources are to consider all jobs within the establishment book to see which posts need to be covered by the ISA.

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### **Common Assessment Framework – CAF**

The Common Assessment Framework is a standardised approach to conducting assessments of a child's needs and deciding how they should be met in a holistic way by all providers of services to children. Lancashire County Council provide CAF training, and this has been accessed by some staff members from Council Housing and Health and Strategic Housing, there is still a need for further training within the council. However, training provision is limited and competition for places is fierce. Training coverage is kept constantly under review by the C&YP Team. All council staff working with C&YP are encouraged to access the training and register on-line through the CAF level 1 which is an on-line presentation followed by a test that is mandatory before progressing on to level 2/Practitioner training. The development of this on line training package is an excellent example of partnership working with our county council colleagues and a very effective and efficient way to keep our staff up to date with this important aspect of children and young people's welfare

### **Conclusion**

This current year has been a challenging experience for the staff in both Cultural Services and Corporate Strategy in light of the senior management restructure that has taken place and the creation of a new Community Engagement Service. Throughout this period however, I have been impressed at the professionalism and dedication of council officers who have not faltered in their responsibilities for delivering these very important services to our communities. Once again I would like to place on record my whole hearted thanks to all concerned.

**Cllr June Ashworth**

## **Councillor Jon Barry: Portfolio Holder for The Environment**



### **1. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- Recycling Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group

### **2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB Executive Committee
- Cycling Demonstration Town Board
- Local Government Association Coastal Issues Special Interest Group
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Environment Thematic Group
- Waste Management Strategy Steering Group

### **3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

#### **Council Service Oversight:-**

City Council (Direct) Services

Property Services (from 13 April 2010)

#### **Links to Corporate Plan Key Actions:-**

3.1 Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Environment Thematic Group Action Plan.

3.2 Implement the Council's In House Climate Strategy.

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3.3 Promote energy efficiency initiatives for local homeowners (specifically Strategic Housing initiatives).

3.4 Improve the energy efficiency of our public buildings.

3.6 Develop Management Plans for the district's AONB's.

5.4 Prepare effective air quality solutions through implementation of the LSP Environment thematic group Stage 2 action plans for air quality.

2.1 Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Environment Thematic Group Action plan.

2.2. Maintain the cleanliness of our streets and public spaces through a combination of education, enforcement and service delivery.

2.3 Work with other organisations / stakeholders to deliver joint projects - Clean Sweep and Street Pride initiatives.

2.4 Implement Lancashire Waste Strategy by :-

- Introducing food waste recycling in 20010/11
- offering commercial waste recycling
- using education and enforcement to increase domestic waste recycling
- increasing the amount of cleansing waster recycled.

5.3 Implement Cycling Demonstration Town programme.

### **Links to LDLSP Priorities 1, 2 and 3:-**

1. *To reduce our impact on and adapt to the consequences of climate change*
2. *Protect and improve air, water and land quality and use resources sustainably with due regard to the interests of the wider community and the environment*
3. *Promote and enhance sustainable forms of transport and reduce private car use in urban areas throughout the District*

## **4. Progress made during 2009/10**

This year I have concentrated my efforts on developing a charter for waste and recycling collections (a set of things that crew members are supposed to follow) and on energy-saving climate change initiatives. The highlight has been the energy reductions achieved at Salt Ayre (about 35%) and I must congratulate the staff and the management there for the progress that has been made. Particular credit should go to the engineer and the manager of the centre. They both have a very refreshing 'can do' attitude. This year, we need to reduce the energy use in the rest of the council by 10% in order to hit our 10/10 challenge commitment. I am also glad that an officer group is now meeting regularly to make progress on our climate change strategy.

## **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

This year will see some big changes in recycling in that we will introduce co-mingling once the new MBT plants at Thornton and Leyland are opened. We will also be introducing food waste collections. One of my personal missions this year is to see what we can do to eliminate peat from our nursery operations.

### **Waste / Recycling**

- Developed plans for collection of mixed recyclables from Sept 2010. This means we'll be operating with 9 less vehicles and less staff and will result in annual revenue savings of over £400K in a full year.
- Changed our collection cycles from Jan 2010 to ensure we make best use of vehicles and staff.
- Introduced waste collection charter and sent one to every household via YDCM
- Increased reuse, recycling, composting figure to 34.67% for 2008/9.
- Second lowest in Lancashire for overall amount of waste (including recycling, composting) collected per person – 357kg in 2008/9.
- Bulky Matters rolled out to Blackpool.
- Trade waste recycling service introduced.
- Free recycling collection service provided to schools via LSP funding.
- Food waste recycling service due to be introduced Sept 2010.
- Signed up to Lancashire Waste Partnership waste strategy and provided briefings on implications to all interested Members and Overview + Scrutiny Committee.
- Arranged visits to new waste management facility at Thornton for all interested Members. A visit to transfer station in Middleton is also arranged.
- Significant increase in number of successful enforcement actions either via FPNs or prosecutions in court.

### **Grounds Maintenance**

- Won award at Tatton show and now planning this year's entry
- Supported various 'in Bloom' entries
- Playground provision review underway.
- Successfully tendered for external works demonstrating value for money.
- Grounds Maintenance assets, schedules, plans etc nearly all mapped electronically now which enables us to identify better which open space is ours and helps us to design planting schemes, mowing schedules etc. more efficiently.
- Worked with a number of local schools and community groups to improve open space (eg planting bulbs, trees)

### **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) were exceeded. Only 5% of areas surveyed in 2008/9 had an unacceptable level of litter.

## **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

- Place survey of shows actual standards compare favourably with other Lancashire Districts. However, in common with other Councils there is still a need to improve people's perception of cleanliness in the District. We have made significant improvements in cleansing in a relatively short period so hopefully people's perceptions will soon start to follow.
- 2009/10 'Street Pride' scheme worked well and 2010/11 programme is being planned
- Worked with other local agencies on 'clean sweep' and other joint projects.
- Targeted enforcement combined with education and improved service delivery is having an impact.
- Continue to improve cleansing schedules, litter bin schedules and methods of work.
- Quick Response Vehicle has had a noticeable effect and successfully bid for external funding to outrightly purchase 2 suitable vehicles which we intend to deploy in 2010/11.

### **Highways Maintenance**

- Continued successful delivery of Highways Maintenance as a sub contractor to the County Council. Performance targets consistently achieved.
- Opportunities for further efficiencies in terms of operation and customer service will be explored through our input into County Council review of public realm.

### **Vehicle Maintenance**

- Continues to operate efficiently and effectively. Selected as finalist for most improved performer in Association of Public Service Excellence Awards.

### **General**

- Ongoing training for frontline staff (manual handling, service specific training etc)
- Ongoing driver training programme in place. All HGV drivers are being given formal training via Lancaster Training Services.
- Real efficiencies continue to be generated.

### **Developing sustainable activity and local responses to climate change**

Developing local responses to climate change is one of four Corporate Priorities that Lancaster City Council is committed to achieving for the benefit of Lancaster district.

In the last year the commitment to climate change initiatives at the Council has grown dramatically. We are now committed to reducing the carbon emissions from our operations by 3.4% annually (aside from 2010/11 with a target of 10%) in order to reach our targets of 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. We anticipate that we will successfully meet this target for 2009/10. Our carbon footprint is currently recorded as 4563.31 tCO<sub>2</sub>.

## **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

Following the adoption of our Climate Change Strategy, the creation of which was lead by the Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group, and the implementation of activities to lower both our energy use and fuel consumption two supporting groups have now been set up internally to ensure its delivery. The Climate Change Officer Working Group, which consists of key senior Officers, is currently securing resources and working on task and finish projects to ensure the continued delivery of the action plan, whilst the Bright Sparx, an team of enthusiastic Officers who encourage and implement waste and energy saving initiatives in all Council offices, help to spread awareness and implement initiatives on the ground.

The Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group submitted a programme of 16 energy efficiency measures, developed by the Engineer at Salt Ayre Sports Centre for funding through the Energy Reduction (Invest-to-Save) budget. The roll out of this programme, which has cost only £29,000, includes the installation of a state-of-the-art pool cover and committed activity by all staff. This activity has resulted in a reduction in energy use at the Centre of 30%, with more savings expected. It is anticipated that over the next 5 years approximately £240,000 of energy will be saved, complimented by a large cut in carbon emissions.

We have commenced a council-wide recycling scheme to manage the waste from our offices and have also taken steps to reduce the mileage of our commercial and staff vehicle fleet. We now procure 21% of our energy from renewable sources and advances in energy saving technology have been made at Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls. New roofing, insulation and fixing of faulty windows at Morecambe, as well as the installation of *powerPerfector* voltage optimising system and efficient light fittings at Lancaster have played a big part in the ongoing refurbishment of these two listed buildings. In addition, climate change initiatives are being rolled out across our council housing with a programme of insulation, double glazing and boiler upgrades ongoing across our housing stock.

The management of our parks and green spaces is being adapted to cope with the extreme weather conditions expected as a result of climate change and further work in planned in the coming year to develop adaptive response across all of our services.

We continue to work closely with the Energy Saving Trust as a member of their One-to-One Support Programme and will shortly publish our action plan, developed with their support and guidance, which involves actions to reduce energy consumption throughout Lancaster district.

This year we have also celebrated our sustainable sea defences at Morecambe and Heysham by submitting a strong bid to the Sustainable Infrastructure Achievement of the Year Award run by the national Management Journal. This bid showcases the great partnerships in Lancaster district and the importance of creative and environmentally aware regeneration in the development of these important defences.

### **Planning: Environment and Waste Portfolio**

The City Council has played a major part in addressing the impacts of climate change through participation in the North West Coastal Forum. Working closely with local

## **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

authority partners and the Environment Agency the forum has prepared its second Shoreline Management Plan for consultation. Local communities in the coastal areas of the district are taking part in active discussions about the various options for addressing rising sea levels. Alongside this the City Council's officers have met with the County Council and Environment Agency to consider how to respond to the new duties to deal with surface water drainage under new Flooding legislation. The City Council has offered its full support in implementing the new measures and awaits instructions on how to proceed.

The next stage in developing the Local Development Framework will be to adopt policies for managing development and allocating land. The Regional Spatial Strategies policies for requiring high levels of energy efficiency from new development will be reflected in the Local Development Framework to secure a consistent approach.

Large areas of Lancaster District are designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the partnerships with other local authorities and Natural England require these areas to be the subject of an up to date and regularly reviewed Management Plan. Both the original plans produced in 2004 were subject to review this year and both reviews have been completed to timetable. The City Council has also agreed to restore the level of contributions made to the operating of the AONB's to their original levels in 2010/11 following budget cuts this year. This was in response to representations which demonstrated that lower contributions could affect the high level of match funding from external bodies which the City Council receives for operating the service.

The Cycling Demonstration Town Project has continued to build essential infrastructure to improve accessibility around the urban areas. This year it has begun to implement schemes to gain access into the core area of Lancaster City Centre. Steps are being taken to investigate whether there will be means to extend the project beyond its current completion date in March 2011.

### **Environmental Health: Air Quality**

The council now has 3 air quality management areas (AQMA's) - Lancaster, Carnforth and Galgate. All the AQMAs relate to pollution caused mainly by road traffic emissions. Lancaster's AQMA is the most challenging and an interim action plan was approved in 2007. Work has begun on developing a final action plan with stakeholders, taking into account the Vision Board's transport study. This will then be the subject of a major public consultation exercise later in 2010. The complexity of developing and implementing real solutions for air quality in Lancaster cannot be underestimated. The LSP is also monitoring progress. Carnforth's AQMA draft action plan is ready for public consultation early in the new financial year. Galgate requires a more detailed further assessment before a draft action plan can be developed.

**Councillor Eileen Blamire: Portfolio Holder for Safety (from 18 May 2009 to 3 February 2010) and Portfolio Holder for Safety and Legal Services and Human Resources (from 3 February 2010)**



**1. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- Lancaster District Regeneration Partnership
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group

**2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

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

**3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

**Council Service Oversight:-**

Corporate Strategy

Planning Services

Legal Services and Human Resources (from 3 February 2010)

**Links to Corporate Plan Key Actions 4.1 and 4.2 (and Corporate Health Performance Indicator CH8 from 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010):-**

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- Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Community Safety Thematic Group Action Plan.
  - Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Valuing People Thematic Group (part).
- CH8 Reduce the number of days lost to sickness absence from 9.98 (2007/8) to 9.50 (2009/10).

Links to LDLSP Priorities:-

- *Reduce crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour*
- *Improve Lancaster District as a safe place to live, work and travel*
- *Reduce the harm caused by drug misuse*
- *Reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse*

### 4. Progress made during 2009/10

#### Community Safety

Performance management procedures are now in place to review the wide range of targets held by the CSP. These procedures allow the CSP to be aware of any arising problems in good time so that early action can be taken. These procedures take the form of a table which sets out progress against targets and opportunities for representatives of action groups to report on progress or flag up any arising issues which may cause concern.

A Strategic Assessment has been completed which sets out the key priority areas for the district for the next financial year. These are: substance misuse/alcohol, domestic violence, antisocial behaviour/disorder, substance misuse/drugs, antisocial behaviour environmental, road safety – collisions and motorcycles. These key priorities will be used to determine the review of the Community Safety Plan which is presently in progress.

The partnership is currently developing its spending plan for the financial year 2010 to 2011 and projects which will continue to be funded are; Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), Multi Agency Partnership (Maps) office, Analytical support. The Admin Support Officer's contract comes to an end in April and reduced admin support arrangements are to be provided by the LSP.

Work will take place to develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which will ensure the partnership attains value for money from the services it funds.

Clean Sweeps continue to be targeted to key areas. Multi-Agency Partnership (Maps) Joint Tasking Groups meet on a fortnightly basis to develop responses to community safety issues as they arise.

The CSP is to have further responsibilities in attaining minimum standards for antisocial behaviour. These are being developed pan county. Probation will become a responsible authority to the CSP, and CSPs will have an additional duty to reduce reoffending.

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The new Maps office at the University is in place and is being used by officers but is not being used for meetings due to difficulty in parking.

Work to improve the partnership against the national standards; of community engagement, leadership, clear and transparent structures, training of partnership members and information sharing continues.

Links have been made between Lancaster City Council Overview and Scrutiny and the CSP so that O&S can have oversight of the work of the partnership.

A county-wide rationalization exercise will be taking place over the coming financial year in which mergers of Community Safety Partnerships will be considered.

Spend for the 2009/2010 financial year is on track and no under spend is expected.

### **Legal and HR**

**Responsibility for Legal and HR was only in my portfolio in recent weeks but I include the full year's appraisal.**

#### Legal and Licensing

The Legal team has remained at full strength and unchanged throughout the year, thus enabling the solicitors to maintain good working relationships with the client Services allocated to them.

The routine day to day legal work includes debt collection, recovery of rent arrears, Council house sales and other property transactions, including sales and leases. The solicitors routinely provide legal advice for Cabinet reports and attend and advise the Licensing Regulatory Committee, Licensing Act Committee and Sub-Committees, Planning Committee and Appeals Committee. The Licensing Act Sub-Committees have over the past year considered six reviews of licences and representations on five new applications, and legal advice has been provided on each occasion.

There have been a number of successful prosecutions throughout the course of the year, relating to smoking in a taxi, benefit fraud, failure to comply with the duty of care for waste, and a range of planning issues including unauthorised use of land for mobile homes and for a car park, and unauthorised advertisements.

Legal Services also supported Planning in successfully defending an appeal against an enforcement notice requiring an unauthorised dwelling to be returned to use as a barn.

Legal advice has been and continues to be given on all major regeneration and property projects. This year the major issues in which Legal were involved were the Lands Tribunal hearing in respect of Luneside East, and the Town Green application in respect of the land at Scotforth.

Local land charges have continued to maintain a high standard of service, returning most searches within five working days. However, the number of searches has remained low as a result of the current economic climate and the state of the housing market.

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In Licensing, problem premises under the Licensing Act 2003 continued to be dealt with by a Multi Agency Licensing Team. The Council's policy under the Gambling Act 2005 was reviewed during the year.

Taxi Liaison Groups have continued to improve discussions between the main taxi companies, the police, the highway authority and the Council's licensing officers on matters of common interest, and a review of taxi ranks has been undertaken, which will result in five additional ranks. During the year more than thirty taxi drivers completed a course aimed at raising their awareness of their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Acts.

Licensing officers were involved in launching an awareness campaign at the start of the academic year, providing young people with advice on getting home safely after a night out. The safety campaign was set up through a partnership between the City Council, Lancashire police, local taxi operators, Lancaster University, the University of Cumbria and Lancaster and Morecambe College. It involved the distribution of a series of posters aimed at promoting a safety message, circulated through all licensed premises, taxi operators, colleges and sixth forms. In addition to posters, an information card was provided, containing a full-colour map showing the location of the main taxi ranks in Lancaster and Morecambe as well as useful advice about taxi use and personal safety.

### **Human Resources**

The major priority for Human Resources (HR) during this year has once again been the Fair Pay project. The Stage 1 appeals were completed, and the fair pay package, including the pay and grading structure was finally approved by Council in November. In December, letters were sent to employees confirming their new pay and grading, and seeking their agreement to variations to their contract of employment. Stage 2 appeals were heard in February, and the new pay and grading structure will be effective from the 1st April 2010, the culmination of many years of hard work by HR.

In addition to the considerable workload demands of the Fair Pay project, the Service has provided advice and support for the proposed restructuring of Council services, and in particular the formation of the new Community Engagement and Regeneration and Policy Services which will be in place from the 1st April 2010.

Unfortunately sickness absence within the Council has increased over the course of this year, and HR officers have been working closely with managers to ensure that the Sickness Absence Management Policy is applied consistently, and used as a tool to reduce absence. This will continue, and HR Officers will be reviewing the Policy to make it more effective, and will also be reviewing the provision of Occupational Health advice.

The Service is also responsible for the corporate training plan, and during this year, the roll-out of customer care training for all employees was completed.

### **Planning Services General**

The City Council remains the only local authority in the North West region to have an adopted Local Development Framework Core Strategy. Steps have been taken this year to prepare for the production of the next suite of documents in the framework.

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Work has commenced on the land allocations and development management policy documents. In addition authority has been given to commence the production of an Area Action plan for central Morecambe.

Whilst there has been a reduction in the number of major planning applications submitted, application numbers in other categories have stabilised. The position is similar for building regulations applications.

In addition to the significant workload associated with the Canal Corridor North Inquiry and subsequent legal issues the service has been dealing with a major scheme to extend the wind farm above Caton and Brookhouse, potential revisions to the Urban splash proposals adjoining the Midland Hotel in Morecambe, retail proposals for Sainsbury's in both Lancaster and Morecambe and proposals to review existing or create new Conservation Areas in the district.

Throughout the year, the Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group has continued to meet and consider a wide range of planning issues. As part of the preparation for the next suite of Local Development Framework (LDF) documents, the Group has considered key evidence base documents such as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and the Local Brownfield Strategy. The group has also considered innovative work carried out by the Forward Planning Team including a survey of rural village needs and the production of a Local Infrastructure Schedule.

The Group continues to monitor performance via the Annual Monitoring report particularly in key areas such as the provision of affordable housing. It has also overseen the programme of conservation area appraisals which are being undertaken by external consultants funded by Planning Delivery Grant money. Finally the group considers responses to planning consultations such as the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the new suite of national infrastructure policy guidance notes.

## **Councillor Abbott Bryning: Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills and Opportunities**



### **1. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- Universities Cabinet Liaison Group
- Lancaster District Chamber Liaison Group (now merged with the Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group to become the Business Liaison Group).

### **2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- Historic Towns Forum
- Lancashire Rural Partnership
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Education, Skills and Opportunities Thematic Group
- Storey Centre for Creative Industries
- Lancaster and District Vision Board's Connectivity Steering Group (from 16 March 2010)

### **3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

#### **Links for Corporate Plan Key Action 1.3:-**

1.3 Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Education, Skills and Opportunities Thematic Group Action Plan.

#### **Links to LDLSP Priorities:-**

- *Increase the provision and opportunities for all people to self develop*
- *Engage NEETS young people and those who are workless on a long term basis in developing work related skills*

#### **4. Progress made during 2009/10**

##### **LDLSP Education, Skills & Opportunities Thematic Group**

Following the retirement of the previous chair, Professor Seward, as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for education, skills and opportunities, I was elected Chair of the Thematic Group in August 2009. Unfortunately Lancaster University have not continued their representation on the group. Work of the Group has focused on clarifying progress on the actions and tasks identified in the original action Plan and monitoring progress on those areas where implementation has been possible, particularly through the establishment of the Employment & Skills Work Group and the Lancaster & Morecambe Worklessness Pilot Project. Administrative support for the Group has been provided on a temporary basis by the LSP team but the longer term provision, together with performance management capacity, needs to be addressed.

##### **Employment & Skills Work Group**

This group was established primarily to develop an Employment & Skills Plan for the District and to develop proposals for co-ordination of outreach and employer engagement. Much of this work has fallen to one city council officer whose capacity has been limited by the additional work generated by the Future Jobs Fund, line managing the Integrated Support Projects Team and supporting the ESO Thematic Group. Consequently, whilst significant progress has been made in developing the Plan, including an assessment of worklessness and skills data, this work has not been completed. It is proposed that the Plan will be finalised during 2010/11 in the context of the Mid-Lancashire Multi Area Agreement and the preparation (at MAA level) of a Work and Skills Plan (including a Worklessness Assessment).

##### **Lancaster & Morecambe Worklessness Pilot Project**

At the beginning of the year the city council, through the Economic Development & Tourism Service, secured Lancaster District LSP funding of almost £200,000 over two years for the implementation of the Lancaster & Morecambe Worklessness Pilot Project. This project targets those neighbourhoods identified under the Lancashire Local Area Agreement as experiencing the highest incidence of people on out of work benefits (NI 153) and provides one-to-one, in depth support to help people back on the path to employment. The project complements mainstream services by working with those who tend to be the hardest to reach, based on referrals primarily from housing providers and the police. Whilst the project got fully underway later than planned, arising from the late funding approval and the need to recruit the outreach workers, it is well on track in terms of outputs achieved against targets. To early March 2010 the project had engaged 68 individuals and helped 17 into work, volunteering or work placements.

##### **Vulnerable Households Project**

Complementary to the Worklessness Project, the Integrated Support Projects Team also delivers a vulnerable households family intervention project, funded through the County Council's Supporting People Programme. Working intensively with a small number of families, the project aims to prevent homelessness and support homeless families with complex needs by addressing root causes to homelessness through incentives and rewards. The aim is to re-engage and support the whole family with a wide range of issues such as housing, debt, domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues by drawing in and co-ordinating expertise and specialist interventions from a large number of voluntary and statutory agencies.

## Executive Annual Report 2009/10

This area of work is set to increase in 2010/11: Supporting People Programme funding has also been secured for a **Targeted Intervention Project**, providing one year funding for two additional outreach staff to work with the most vulnerable, or “high demand”, households across the district, often associated with anti-social behaviour and problematic tenancies within the social and private rented sector; it is also proposed that the Integrated Support Projects Team will deliver part of the **Connecting Communities** project targeting disengaged families in Skerton West and Skerton East wards.

### Future Jobs Fund

As part of the £1 billion national programme to create 150,000 wholly additional jobs, primarily for unemployed 18 to 24 year olds, the city council is an active partner in the Mid-Lancashire programme, led by the county council, which bid successfully for £3.27m towards the creation of 503 jobs. As well as approaching local organisations to consider providing jobs under the programme, the Economic Development & Tourism Service, working closely with Human Resources, has encouraged city council services to put forward proposals leading to two internal jobs in the first period to March 2010. Five additional internal jobs were put forward for the second period (2010/11) following a well-attended briefing for Service Heads and managers in January 2010. In each case, the jobs will last for six months, providing real work experience and skills which will improve the employment prospects of the individuals concerned at no net cost to the council.

### Apprenticeships and Work Trials

In addition to its support for the Future Jobs Fund, the city council has a significant role to play, as a major employer, in supporting employment and skills activity locally. In response to the very limited number of apprenticeships in the city council, and the drive at national and LAA level to increase the number of public sector apprenticeships, the Economic Development & Tourism Service has liaised with Lancashire County Council's Human Resources team to help raise the profile of apprenticeship opportunities and work trials within the council. The County Council gave a presentation to Service Heads and managers in January 2010 on their role in supporting apprenticeships and work trials and this is now to be taken forward by the city council's HR team, although capacity has been stretched by the impact of Job Evaluation and Service restructuring. During the year, the city council has also signed a Local Employment Partnership agreement with Jobcentre Plus, formalising the relationship between the two organisations.

As this is submitted for presentation, Councillors who read the weekly 'FIRST' magazine will have noted proposed changes in government policy.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is being disbanded. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, local authorities took on responsibility for the commissioning and funding of 16 to 19 education and training (and up to 25 for those with additional needs). The 'Raising Expectations Action' (REACT) delivers initial training for local authority staff engaged on the new arrangements as allocations of learner places by the LSC are transferred.

Finally, members will note that I have stressed concern about ensuring that adequate staff capacity is available to complete ESO programmes following the ongoing restructuring of our Council services.

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May I also thank staff for their help and advice in a period of transition and in particular, to Peter Sandford for his support over many years in the area of Economic Development and Regeneration.

Abbott Bryning

## Councillor Jane Fletcher: Portfolio Holder for Valuing People



### 1. Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Vice-Chair Valuing People Thematic group

### 2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Lancaster and District YMCA Management Board                                 | • Lancaster District Community Safety Strategy                 |
| • Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Valuing People Thematic Group | • Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership (from 16 March 2010) |

### 3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

**Links to Corporate Plan Key Action 7.1 and Corporate Health Performance Indicator CH9:-**

7.1 Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Valuing People Thematic Group Action Plan – develop and implement a Community Cohesion Strategy.

CH9 Level of Equality Standard for Local Government.

#### **Links to LDLSP Priorities:-**

- *Improve community cohesion, a sense of belonging and taking part by promoting positive relationships between the diverse and emerging communities and groups in the Lancaster District*
- *Increase the resources available to the voluntary, community and faith sector in order to strengthen community engagement and enable the sector to act as advocates for and service providers to our local communities*
- *Enable older people within the Lancaster District to contribute to all aspects of life, both economic and social, and to receive support when needed*

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- *Increase effective support and guidance for all carers*

### 4. Progress made during 2009/10

#### VALUING PEOPLE THEMATIC GROUP

Some of the progress that has been made in my portfolio area is related to the work of The Valuing People Thematic Group. The members of the group represent public and voluntary sector organisations such as Age Concern, EDEN (**E**quality and Diversity Engagement Network, Lancaster District Older Persons Partnership, One Voice disability project and Lancaster District Community Leaders Group. The organisations work in partnership with the Council to deliver improvements focused upon the thematic group's priorities and objectives.

Below is a summary of the status of current projects and how they relate to meeting objectives within my portfolio area.

#### Current Projects

The Thematic group has secured funding for the following:

- **A Parish Charter for the Lancaster district**
- **An updated Local Infrastructure Action Plan**
- **The Lancaster District Volunteering Strategy**
- **Lancaster Volunteer Bureau**
- **An Older People's Strategy for the Lancaster district**
- **The LDLSP Community Grants Scheme**
- **Pomocna Dlon**
- **Disability Arts Festival**
- **Changing Lives Website**

#### Valuing People: Priorities and Objectives

**Priority 1:** Improve community cohesion, a sense of belonging and taking part by promoting positive relationships between the diverse and emerging communities and groups in the Lancaster District

#### Objectives

- Improve Lancaster district as a place that celebrates diversity, welcomes newcomers and promotes positive relationships between the districts' diverse communities and groups
- Reduce the harm caused by prejudice and discrimination

#### Examples of progress to date

##### LDLSP Community Grants

The LSP Community Grants allow grassroots community groups to access funding for small amounts of money that would otherwise be unavailable to them. The Grant pot totalled £30,000 and received applications totalling £100,819. The highest percentage of priorities identified came under Valuing People, Health and Wellbeing and Education, Skills & Opportunity, followed closely by Environment.

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Pound for pound small grants provided to small voluntary led groups provide tremendous value for money both in terms of volunteer input but also in the harder to measure promotion of social capital. Relatively small amounts of funding to these local groups can encourage community engagement, increase and promote volunteering opportunities and promote self help. In terms of community engagement, it is often these voluntary led groups which provide the potential to access points into these communities where people are reluctant to engage with public institutions. For example, the Hua Xian Chinese Society received funding to purchase a computer and to pay for internet access to enable their volunteers to assist with writing for people who attend their drop in and information sessions. The computers will also be used to help with the English classes which they organise – again these are all run by volunteers.

Community Grants play a crucial role in enabling small groups to develop their capacity and move on to making a bigger impact on their community. For example as a result of applying to the Community Grant fund, The Morecambe Children's Integration group found out about the CVS Funding Fair in Hornsby and will be able to access support to apply to other pots of funding for their community.

Community Grants are able to fund specific activities run by local groups addressing specific and very local issues which make a real difference to people's lives. For example, the grant to Carnforth Otters has paid coaching costs to enable this entirely volunteer run club, to provide a healthy activity and promote achievement and self esteem (through their success in the swimming leagues) for children living in one of the more deprived areas in our District.

Small Grants can also provide "seed money" for groups to try out new projects. For example Happenstance Arts Collective's Reminiscence based arts project with the over 55s offered a high quality arts project in the area; they are now working to extend the scope and scale of the work they plan to do in the Region.

The final round of community grants closed on 4<sup>th</sup> November 09 and the panel met on 12<sup>th</sup> November to look at final applications. A Final Report will be available at the end of May 2010 once monitoring information has been collected and compiled.

### The Parish Charter Lancaster District

The Lancashire Association of Local Councils (Lancaster District) has been kept informed about developments since the funds were allocated, and a steering group of Councillors is jointly responsible for progress.

Drafts of charters developed by other districts have been located, and the Council recently agreed to consider whether wider scope or different focus would be appropriate to meet our objectives.

The Lancashire Association of Local Councils has provided other exemplars of developments in other districts, and provides advice as requested. The focused consideration has raised awareness and expectations of Parish Councillors about how the charter can make a difference to meeting the objectives.

### Disability Arts Festival

The festival took place on the last week of August and ran through until 6<sup>th</sup> September. The festival was received well and attracted audiences of around 3,000 across Lancaster District.

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The festival attracted nationally respected disabled Practitioners to the district which provided an opportunity to explore the concept of disability arts.

It is hoped that this will become an annual event but will need a longer planning timetable and sufficient resources.

### Pomocna Dlon - Polish Association

A fortnightly Drop-in Service offers help and advice to the Polish community, helping them to fully integrate into the local community. A bilingual newsletter was first published in June. There are new people visiting each session for assistance and assistance is also offered with ongoing issues.

The Translation and Interpretation Service receives requests for help. A bi-lingual community interpreter is employed on a casual basis at present.

Research amongst agencies – A questionnaire has been developed that aims to allow agencies to identify specific barriers to working effectively with migrants.

Research amongst the Polish Community – A timetable and plan of action has been developed to carry out research covering specific areas.

Staff – A Project Co-ordinator is in place and Community Development worker is employed on a casual basis

**Priority 2:** Increase the resources available to the voluntary, community and faith sector in order to strengthen community engagement and enable the sector to act as advocates for and service providers for our local communities

### **Objective**

· To ensure that resources are focused on areas of the voluntary, community & faith sector that need the support

### **Examples of progress to date**

#### Lancaster District Volunteering Strategy

The Volunteering Strategy has now been launched. The key highlight was the bringing together of key partners for the first time to form the Steering group advising the Strategy. These included the DWP; key volunteer brokers and VCFS organisations providing volunteering involving opportunities. The steering group also received an up-date from Volunteering Lancashire on the data base designed to gather District wide data to enable us to measure our performance in relation to the NI7 target.

#### Local Infrastructure Action Plan

The Project had two elements:

1) The up-date of the **Local Infrastructure Action Plan (LIAP)** – a strategy for the delivery of support to Voluntary Organisations in the District. This has been incorporated into CVS's Business Plan and will be made available on CVS's website. [www.lancastercv.org.uk](http://www.lancastercv.org.uk).

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2) A study of Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations in the District and the production of a report **"The Sector Counts"**. 219 organisations were identified in the District providing an estimated 388 equivalent full-time jobs and contributing over £4,200,000 of volunteer hours to our community every year. In current economic climate it is important to be aware of the value – financial and otherwise that the voluntary sector brings to our community.

"The Sector Counts" was launched at CVS's open day in June to which partners were invited. The up-dated LIAP has enabled CVS to progress with an informed strategic approach the delivery of its support services to voluntary groups in the area. One public example being the introduction of an annual sector Funding Fair into its programme of events for the District.

48% of the groups we surveyed are what are often referred to as "below the radar". These are unincorporated groups with annual funds of less than £5,000 which means they are not registered with the Charity Commission. These are the "hard to reach" groups of the Voluntary Sector. This information enables us to better recognise their contribution to the District and work with them to identify the kind of support they need.

**Priority 3:** Enable Older People within the Lancaster district to contribute to all aspects of life, both economic & social and to receive support when needed

### **Objectives**

- · Reduce feelings of social isolation and increase older people's engagement in community life
- · Increase the financial security of older and vulnerable people
- · Increase the number of older and vulnerable people remaining in paid employment
- · Promote a culture of prevention and early intervention during the strategic planning of services for older & vulnerable people
- · Reduce the number of older and vulnerable people moving into long term residential care by ensuring that those people who plan services for them ensure that help and advice is provided early

### **Examples of progress to date**

#### Older People's Strategy

The strategy has been completed in draft form and has been shared with Relevant Partners and stakeholders for consultation regarding content and format. We have also produced a shorter easy read summary of the strategy to use as a consultation tool whilst attempting to engage with the wider public about what they would like to see in regard to the older peoples' agenda within the Lancaster District.

The formation of a Members Task Group around the Older People's agenda in Lancaster has been a really positive step in the engagement of Lancaster City Council in an area that historically they have had little involvement with. This is hopefully going to lay the foundations of a robust partnership between Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council and North Lancashire Primary Care Trust along with representatives of the third sector and older people's groups.

## **EQUALITY STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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The Equality Framework for Local Government assesses how local authorities perform in terms of equality of provision in both their internal and external work. The Council has been seriously behind target over recent years and is the worst performing in the region. There had historically been no political will to rectify this position but members have recently undertaking training and at its meeting in March the Cabinet acknowledged that if we are to make progress on the Equality Framework resources must be allocated. It is my hope and expectation that provision will be made to take this work forward within the new Community Engagement Directorate.

### **GRANTS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

#### **Welfare Grants**

I am responsible for assessing the applications for Welfare Grants. These grants provide assistance to organisations involved with elderly people to provide food and recreation, to create opportunities to socialise and to reduce feelings of isolation. Although the small grants scheme was much reduced following budget cuts in place from April 2009, the Council still offers £3,100 in welfare grants to organisations.

In 2009/10 the Council has helped organisations to provide a range of activities such as historical site visits, a fish and chip cruise and to purchase a bingo machine. Grants of between £200 and £400 have been awarded to organisations such as Caton and Brookhouse Friendship Club, Age Concern, Galgate History Group, Lonsdale Arthritis Social Group and the Friendship Centre within Lancaster Baptist Church.

#### **Grants to outside organisations**

At the Leader's request, I have also undertaken a review of the Council's arrangements for grants to outside organisations such as the Samaritans, CABs, Signposts, and, in partnership with Cllr June Ashworth, cultural organisations such as LitFest. The purpose of the review was to gain strategic oversight into how these grants help the Council to meet its priorities and the wider value that these grants bring to the District. As a result of this work it has been decided that arrangements will be put into place to monitor the performance of the funded organisations to assess the value for money they provide to the Council – this may involve the Council's Projects Management team in future who are accustomed to this work. Most of the SLAs in place expire in March 2011 and will therefore be reviewed during the coming year.

## Councillor David Kerr: Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing



### 1. Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group

### 2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Health and Wellbeing Thematic Group

### 3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

#### Council Service Oversight:-

Council Housing

Health and Strategic Housing

#### Links to Corporate Plan Key Actions 5.1, 3.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5.

- 5.1 Deliver the Council's actions in the LDLSP's Health and Well Being Thematic Group Action Plan.
- 3.5 Improve the energy efficiency of our council housing stock.
- 6.1 Deliver the council's actions in the LDLSP's Health & Well Being Thematic Group action plan - Provide affordable housing in accordance with the Housing Strategy and Local Development Framework.
- 6.2 Reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation.
- 6.3 Refresh Housing Strategy 2009-2012.
- 6.4 Implement Homeless Strategy Action Plan - Reduce the levels of homelessness within the district.
- 6.5 Deliver 2009/10 council housing Capital programme.

#### Links to LDLSP Priorities:-

- *Reduce health and wellbeing inequalities*
- *Reduce premature deaths attributed to lifestyle choices*

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- *Reduce alcohol related harm*
- *Increase the proportion of people who have a decent, affordable, warm, safe home*
- *Increase the proportion of people who can access appropriate finances, resources and advice in order to meet their essential needs*

### 4. Progress made during 2009/10

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

- The cemeteries service has continued to improve most notably with the development of the baby and young children's memorial area at Torrisholme. Our continued work with the friends group and our own staff's efforts led to Torrisholme cemetery being awarded "Cemetery of the Year" in a national award competition. In addition the council signed the Charter for the Bereaved and significantly improved our score from 3 years ago. We are also working with a new Friends Group for Morecambe Cemetery.
- The food and health and safety section has been busy again ensuring all targets for high risk food premises were completed on time as well as responding to unforeseen events in the year such as inspecting and advising all open farms in the area following the E.coli 0157 outbreak in the south of the country. The food safety service has been successful in obtaining a grant from the food standards agency to help us to implement the national "scores on the doors" project which will be a major piece of work in 2010/11.
- We've introduced several improvements to customer service this year e.g. a quality assurance system in Environmental Protection to complement the one already in existence in food safety, improved our website content, introduced a new booklet explaining what services we offer and introduced a facility for customers to pay for some services over the phone. We have also trialled new ways of working with several members of staff working from home on a regular basis.
- The long awaited dog control orders are nearing completion. Consultation has been carried out and the signs have started to be erected. The orders will allow more control for dogs off leads as well as a heavier fine for fouling.
- The service has issued 4 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling this year. Of these 2 have been paid and one is being pursued. The other one was taken to court and fined £260 plus costs. A good result. One offender has also been prosecuted this year for dogs off leads offence and fined £115 plus costs. As ever, the service is disappointed by the low number of offences witnessed and still encourages anyone who witnesses an offence to report it.
- We have had a bit more success with fixed penalty notices for smoking offences – mainly where people are caught smoking in a vehicle used for work purposes. 19 FPN's have been issued and 6 of these were as part of a special operation with the police.

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- In the area of civil contingencies, following the success of the Community Emergency Plan at Sunderland Point the CCO is now working with Wray with Botton Parish Council on a plan for that village.
- 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. Incidents attended during the past year have included several major fires, flooding and severe weather incidents, chemical incidents, building collapses, transport accidents and a water shortage incident on a local park homes site.
- Business Continuity plans have been activated on several occasions for IT and Telephony failures. These incidents are always debriefed and the learning cascaded to other services. The Council has invested in the infrastructure at Salt Ayre Sports Centre, particularly power supplies, so that it can now provide a 'fall back' office facility should there be an incident involving loss of access to any of the Council buildings.

### **STRATEGIC HOUSING**

- The Homelessness service has once again achieved the corporate plan, national indicator and business plan targets this year. Homeless acceptances continue to fall and successful prevention cases continue to increase. The prevention contract with the YMCA is working well and is proving very helpful in the overall reduction to the number of statutory homelessness cases. The council has also supported a £3m CLG funded project for the provision of additional services and temporary accommodation at the YMCA building in Lancaster.
- The Homelessness service has established the Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS), which has already been successful in preventing home owners under the threat of repossession from losing their homes. The MRS also includes a contract with the Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver a 'Debt Advice' service.
- The DCLG target for the number of households living in temporary accommodation (TA) in 09/10 is 12 (NI 156). The Homelessness team have already exceeded this target and by the end on March 2010 there will only be 7 available TA properties.
- With the aid of funding from Supporting People a second Handyperson was recruited in 2009 on a one year contract. It is hoped that funding will be made available to extend this position. Funding for the existing Handyperson Scheme has also been secured for 2010/11.
- The disabled facilities grant programme has once again maximised the budget for the year and continues to provide an excellent service. Demand is growing for the grant but the service faces challenging times next year as the required level of budget is likely to suffer due to the reduction in the Regional Housing Pot allocation.

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- The baseline targets for NI 187, Fuel Poverty, were established last year. The national indicator contains two separate targets. The second survey has recently been completed and it shows that the Council are slightly under achieving against one of the targets but have exceeded the second target.
- Consideration is currently at an early stage for the work carried out by the Home Improvement team to be submitted for approval, possibly next year, as a formally recognised Home Improvement Agency. However, this depends on many factors, not least of which is the outcome of the current county wide review being carried out by Supporting People.

### **Planning**

The housing capital programme has been implementing improvement schemes and disabled facilities grants in line with a programme approved by the Council. Challenges as a result of reduced funding in future years have meant that current projects will need to be scaled down in future years. However support for organisations dealing with homelessness is being delivered by new facilities for the YMCA in Lancaster and that project is being delivered to target. In Morecambe a scheme has been designed to remove upper floors from former boarding houses to create family housing. It is hoped to implement that scheme in the next financial year.

The Strategic Housing function was transferred to the Planning Service this year and the vacant posts within it have now been filled. Progress is starting on examining how to allocate funds received as contributions from planning applications, to assist Housing Associations to create affordable housing units.

There has been little progress on delivering affordable housing units via the private sector due to the effect of the recession on the house building industry. During the year however negotiations have commenced again with two major house builders to deliver over 400 homes at Luneside West. As part of these discussions it is anticipated that a significant contribution in the form of affordable housing will be made.

There remains clear evidence that the district has an adequate supply of land which can be made available for housing to meet the merging needs of the District.

### **Council Housing**

#### **1. Repair and Maintenance.**

The section has had to cope with the absence of its Operations Manager for the whole of 2009/2010. Despite this, responsive repairs performance continues to improve. The average time taken to undertake none urgent repairs is now just 6.6 days (compared with 8.7 days in 2008/2009 and 11.3 days in 2007/2008). The Section has also successfully delivered a number of key corporate targets:

Five Year Partnering Contract for the Delivery of the Capital and Planned Maintenance Programme - this has been tendered and evaluated, with Herbert T Forrest being appointed as our future partner. Operational arrangements are now in place for the

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partnership to become effective with effect from April 2010. From then, all major works to our properties will either be undertaken by the Council's own operatives or by Herbert T Forrest. In future, the use of sub contractors will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Five Year Partnering Contract for Gas Servicing and Boiler Replacement - again, this has been tendered and evaluated. The contract was awarded to Emcor who were also the council's partner for the previous contract.

Void Turnaround Times - during 2009/2010, unfortunately the average time to relet vacant properties increased to 41.9 days, which was significantly above target. An action plan was put in place during the summer of 2009 and, performance is now significantly improved. It is anticipated that this year's cumulative performance will be below 38 days.

### **2. Housing Management.**

Choice Based lettings/Housing options Service/Review of Allocations Policies - this has been a major piece of work which has already been the subject of two reports to Cabinet (01 September 2009 and 16 March 2010). Officers successfully bid for government funding to support the introduction of Choice Based Lettings. This will radically alter the way social housing is allocated in future, as applicants will "bid" for properties which the council will advertise on a weekly basis, and vacancies will be allocated to bidders who have the highest priority. The scheme will be used to advertise vacancies in all sectors, thus significantly increasing the opportunities to rehouse anyone in housing need. In order to support this comprehensive approach to meeting housing need, we will also be undertaking a reorganisation of staff at an operational level to create a Housing Options Service. This will join together staff currently working in both Council Housing and Health and Strategic Housing to create a "one stop shop" for anyone who needs advice or assistance to resolve their housing needs.

Renewal of Emergency Call Centre - following a tender and evaluation process, the contract for the renewal of the Emergency Call Centre Equipment has been awarded to Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Ltd. The renewal of the equipment was necessary to ensure the continued reliability of the dispersed alarm service which the council provides to the most vulnerable members of the community. The new equipment is now being installed and call handling will go live on 09 March 2010.

Review of Communal Areas - in recent years, priority has rightly been given to ensuring all our properties meet the Decent Homes Standard. Having ensured that target has been achieved (and can be maintained), officers are now looking at ways in which the communal areas of flats can also be improved in order to meet current standards and tenant aspirations. Over the past year, every block has been surveyed in order to assess levels of security, cleanliness, standards of floor and wall finishes, lighting, and refuse storage arrangements. The results of the surveys are currently being analysed, and the intention is to produce a rolling programme of improvement works which can be incorporated within future HRA Capital Programmes.

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Estate Inspections - as Cabinet Member with responsibility for council housing, over the past year, I have attended a series of estate walkabouts which included all the main estates in Lancaster, Morecambe, Heysham, Carnforth and most villages. I ensured that relevant officers, ward councillors and community representatives were invited to the walkabouts. These provided me with an excellent opportunity to hear and see at first hand what the issues were at a local level and to get a better understanding of the service we provide and whether we are meeting tenants priorities.

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 deliver such a good service on behalf of the Council without hesitation.

Cllr David Kerr  
Cabinet Member

## **Councillor Stuart Langhorn: Leader of the Council**



### **1. Introduction**

Last year the Council decided that the Cabinet membership should be based upon proportional representation. As Leader of the Cabinet I am tasked to make sure that the Cabinet delivers Council's agreed objectives in the Corporate Plan. Each Cabinet Member is appointed by their own political group and not chosen by the Leader. However, the Leader does allocate the portfolios to each Cabinet member. So as a new Leader of Cabinet you inherit the Corporate Plan agreed by Council and are given your team.

At the start of the year I decided that seven of the portfolios should be aligned with the thematic groups of the Lancaster District LSP. The remaining three would reflect the internal needs of the council. This was done to allow a more focussed style of partnership working and to allow opportunities for members to work in a much more fluid way in order to achieve the aims of our own Corporate Plan – especially where it is aligned with the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Sustainable Community Strategy groups the Lancaster District LSP's priorities into seven themes:

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

Throughout this year, as Leader, I have made it clear that it is my view that Cabinet members are Portfolio holders first and members of political parties second. As Leader I have regularly met with individual Cabinet members to discuss their portfolios,

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performance and future developments. This has allowed members to take responsibility for and develop their own areas. I wish to acknowledge their hard work in doing this.

The work of Cabinet this year has been done in the context of a number of factors which have created pressure on us as a Council:

1. Last year the previous Leader of the Cabinet resigned. In his report Cllr Mace commented

‘By February 4<sup>th</sup> 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.’

The challenge for Cabinet this year was to make sure that decisions were made in a good fashion and that the Cabinet worked.

2. The budget for 2009/10 had made a commitment to reduce costs by predicting savings from some services this year – without being clear on how these were to be achieved.
3. The national context of recession meant that projects relying on external funding from private and public sectors were under threat.
4. Predictions on future funding from Central Government were, at best uncertain, at worst would see a reduction of up to 20% in future years.

In the first quarter of the year Cabinet members met with their officers in order to understand the implications of the 2009 Budget on their portfolio. They looked at what savings were required in 2009/10, what overspends there had been in the previous year and the reasons for them. Work was also done to understand how much of the Council's spending was aligned to our priorities.

During the second quarter discussions moved onto priorities for next year. It was agreed that priorities should be:

- Economic Regeneration - Supporting our economy
- Climate Change
- Statutory Services – Meeting Our Responsibilities
- Partnership Working & Community Leadership

This has allowed the Cabinet to shape its budget for next year and to begin to focus on savings for future years. Instead of looking for one off savings long term savings have been achieved by restructuring four services, investing in order to save and taking opportunities for partnership working.

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The third quarter saw the Cabinet produce its options for the 2010/11 budget. Given the context outlined above it is a significant achievement that this was achieved ahead of schedule. In turn this has allowed Cabinet to begin to look at future year's budgets and to begin to refocus resources on our stated priorities.

Lancaster City Council represents a diverse district, both in terms of geography and different communities. I have tried to reflect this during the last year. First of all there are no longer portfolios specifically allocated for particular areas. For example, the Economy portfolio is not split between Lancaster, Morecambe and the rural areas. This follows recommendations from our audit last year. This has helped the Cabinet to give a clear sense of the direction for the whole District. I have also been very pleased to be able to attend the Lancaster District Community Leaders group. This group consists of community leaders from faith and minority groups as well as police and local authorities. It is good to see everybody working together.

### **2. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet

### **3. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Lancaster and District Vision Board       | • Local Government Association Rural Commission                   |
| • Forest of Bowland AONB Advisory Committee | • Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Management Group |
| • Lancashire Leaders                        | • Morecambe Bay Partnership                                       |
| • Local Government Association Executive    |   |

### **4. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

- *Relationships with other Councils*
- *Community Planning (Lancaster District LSP)*
- *Community Engagement and Consultation*
- *Neighbourhood Management/Community Leadership*
- *Performance Management*

From 3 March 2010:

- *Financial Services*
- *Property Services (Until 13 April 2010)*
- *Information & Customer Services*
- *Revenue Services*
- *Democratic Services (the Legal and HR part of the Internal portfolio passed to Councillor Blamire on 3rd February)*

From 22 April 2010:

- *The Economy*

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### **Links to Corporate Plan Key Actions 7.2 and 7.4 and Corporate Health Performance Indicators CH6 and CH7:-**

7.2 Support the LDLSP's development of a Community Engagement Framework for the district where this is a priority for the Council.

7.4 Continue to work with Lancashire County Council and the district's parish and town councils to ensure the three tiers of local government work more effectively (includes development of a district Parish Charter).

CH6. % of residents rate their local area as a very good or fairly good place to live – baseline and target to be established from Place Survey.

CH7. % of residents agree that the City Council provides value for money (Place Survey).

Maintain Level 1 of the Member Development Charter.

## **5. Progress made during 2009/10**

Relationships with other councils:-

### **Morecambe Bay**

We have been pursuing opportunities to work more closely with authorities around Morecambe Bay. Initial discussions took place with the Leader of South Lakes District Council in the early Autumn. This was followed up by a meeting of all the authorities around Morecambe Bay and representatives from the NWDA. There is an acknowledgement that we all need to work more closely together in order to promote the economic identity of the area. Future meetings are planned to move this agenda forward.

### **Lancashire District Councils**

As Leader I attend the regular meetings of all the Lancashire District Council Leaders. One of the main concerns this year has been the subject of Concessionary Travel. District councils have had a pooling arrangement and have been negotiating with the bus companies over levels of subsidy. This has a hugely complex issue – but one that has a potentially enormous impact on the authorities budgets. What is true is that all district councils would like to see the government fund and organise the scheme more appropriately.

The second issue that has been the subject of discussion has been the County Council's decision to end Lancashire Locals. It is clear that District Council's are concerned by this development and are looking for assurances about future working.

We have also been exploring opportunities to work more closely with Preston City Council. Members will be aware of the sharing of the management of Revenues and Benefits.

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### **Lancashire County Council**

The new leader of the County Council has expressed the intention for increased partnership working and an openness to do things in new ways. At a very early stage I contacted Councillor Driver to indicate that this authority welcomes this approach. I have made it clear that this authority desires to work more closely – particularly in taking opportunities for shared working on highways post Lancashire Locals.

We have been working very closely on the application for the Mid-Lancashire Multi Area Agreement. This involves Lancashire County Council, Preston City Council, South Ribble, Chorley, West Lancashire and Lancaster City Council. This will provide an opportunity to speak with one voice regionally and nationally for our area and attract funding and investment.

Sometimes difficult decisions have to be made. Just as the County have made a difficult decision of Lancashire Locals, we have made decisions on partnership working with the Museum's service and Community Pools. Partnership working means that you have to make your position clear to partners – so that you can work together for desired outcomes. A recent meeting with Cllr. Driver resulted in a joint statement on our intention to make sure community swimming continues in this District within the context of discussions on a range of partnership opportunities.

### **Parish Councils**

I attend the meetings of the Lancashire Association of Local Councils. Two decisions of the City Council have caused concerns over the last year. First of all the decision Council took on Special Expenses last year. The Review and Audit of Parish Council Funding Task Group made recommendations this year, referred to in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.. There is future work to be done in this area – but a recent report of the Rural Commission outlines ways in which different tiers of Local Authority can work more closely together. In this District work is being done on a Parish Charter. This work is being directed through the Valuing People group on the LDLSP and there is agreement that this should be a relationship that includes all public sector bodies.

The second issue that has caused concern has been the running of toilets. The proposal to offer up to 50% of the City Council's running costs was not always understood. However, many Parish Councils have now taken the opportunity to enter into this partnership and this has allowed the service to continue in most areas.

### **LGA**

The Local Government Associations have been leading negotiations on Local Authorities behalf regarding the Icelandic Bank losses. Regular reports are received on these negotiations. The situation is complex and has changed throughout the year. However, it is important to recognise the valuable work that the LGA have been doing on behalf of this authority and their ongoing contribution.

### **Community Planning**

LDLSP Management Group

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I represent the Council on the Management Group of the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership, where I am also Vice-Chair. This group meets on a quarterly basis and is responsible for allocating funding to projects and performance management of the LDLSP. Major developments this year have been the establishment of working groups to look at how the key partners can work more closely together on three key areas: community engagement, Arts and Culture and Procurement. In addition work has been done on Climate Change. There are clearly opportunities for us all to work much more closely together for the good of the District. The LDLSP will become much more focussed on delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and not just a place to share individual projects.

### **Performance Reward Grant**

The LDLSP will be the delivery mechanism for the Local Area Agreement (LAA) performance reward grant. This will be £1 million over the course of two years. The decision has already been made to align the grant with the County LAA's 'Big Ticket Issues' – with the addition of Community Cohesion. Meetings will be taking place over the next month in order to discuss ideas for projects for this funding stream.

### **Community Engagement and Consultation**

#### **Community Engagement Framework**

The Council agreed to sign up to the LDLSP Community Engagement Framework. This document provides an outline of how key partners will consult with the public. It provides a commitment to use best practice. A working group is looking at how partners can work together to implement this framework. This should not only bring potential cost savings – but it will also allow members of the public to feel much more engaged with the decision making processes in the District. We know from the Place Survey that whilst people enjoy living in the area, they feel that they have little power to change things. This framework provides all partners with a way forward to redress this issue.

### **Working with other partners**

It is increasingly important for the council to work with partners in the District – be they public, private or voluntary sector. During the year I have met with a wide variety of partners. These include:

- Morecambe Football Club
- Lancaster Vision Board
- Urban Splash
- The Big Wide Talk
- The Winter Gardens
- Friends of the Earth
- The Dukes
- Storey Gallery
- Lancaster Lit Fest.
- Morecambe Bay Hospitals University Trust

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Increasingly such partnerships are being directed through the LDSLSP so they can involve all the key players in the District. Work is also ongoing on assessing the performance of partnerships.

### **Communication**

The Cabinet took the decision to reorganise the Council's communications and marketing function into one team. This will make revenue savings – but will also allow the Council to brand itself much more effectively. Further Developments have included regular press briefings to allow local press to receive information on council business and a Leader's Blog so members of the public can receive information on the progress of the Council.

### **Budget Consultation**

The Council engaged in a consultation exercise on its budget proposals for the first time ever. The events took place in January this year – and though blighted by the bad weather they did provide an opportunity for the public to tell the council what they thought of budget ideas for the future. Cabinet are using the information provided to help shape future decisions.

### **Neighbourhood Management/ Community Leadership**

I have already mentioned the successful Lancaster Community Leader's Group and attendance of the LALC meetings and the drafting of a Parish Charter. The LDLSP Community Engagement Framework provides a further opportunity to move forward the engagement of all public sectors, including the council, with the public. Clearly, the Place Survey has identified the need to engage with communities much more effectively. The restructure has provided the authority with a new Community Engagement service and at its heart will be the desire to look anew at how the authority works with the public.

One exciting development in this area has been the Connecting Communities - Skerton Project. A successful bid for funding was made to the department for communities. The project is now going ahead and, although at early stages, is attracting further funding.

### **Performance Management**

The Council's performance reporting processes are well established and continue to provide a sustained focus on ensuring that council priorities are delivered. In addition, our bespoke project management tool LAMP (Lancaster Approach to Managing Projects) ensures that key council projects are delivered to time, cost and quality and deliver envisaged benefits.

Changes to the way the Council is judged externally mean that the council scores a 2 'performing adequately' for both the Organisational Assessment element of the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the annual Use of Resources judgement. This does not reflect a slipping in standards, but rather a harder test of local authorities' processes and procedures. I am confident that in the coming year a streamlined, re-structured council will prove better able to manage performance in a rapidly changing landscape. This is why the work Cabinet did earlier this year is so important in aligning our budget resources to our priorities.

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Some of these changes are already delivering benefits. The council has made significant changes to the way it makes decisions on all of its projects and programmes by creating a new internal governance structure. This change of emphasis is supported at the highest level and replaces the council's former Asset Management Working Group with the Corporate Programme Management Group (CProg), which includes a range of senior managers. CProg is underpinned by a Technical Officers Group and a robust assessment and appraisal process. These arrangements provide robust challenge and allow better quality information to be made available to decision makers. The proposed new information management system is linked to this agenda and will provide the mechanism by which decision makers can maintain a strategic overview of success, failure, risk and overall impact. Over time, this should have a significant effect on the council's ability to ensure that it is doing the right things and doing them right.

The council's Programmes and Funding Team was created on 1 April 2009. The driver for this change was the council's desire to make better use of its existing experience, skills and knowledge. This team is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the performance of all of the council's projects and programmes as well as working across the council to raise standards and improve outcomes and the level of benefits achieved. This is managed via support for project and programme methodology, regular health checks including verification of financial and performance data, the spread of best practice and lessons learned and external funding. The Programmes and Funding Team is informally aligned with a number of internal experts from other services and regularly works together with these on new developments and joint issues. Arising from this approach, a corporate Centre of Excellence has now been approved and established to help raise standards and consistency and will provide a central resource for information, guidance and training on key topics including project and programme, risk and performance management.

During the year 2009/10 the council has been reviewing its performance management systems and investigating alternative products, more appropriate to our emerging needs. The main driver for this decision was the intended re-structure of council services which will bring the Performance Management function and our Programmes and Funding Team together in the same service. This presents a real opportunity to extend the quality and scope of our performance management system to capture and monitor the effective management of both performance and programmes and projects within the same system. It is hoped that this new system will be in place by the second quarter of the new financial year.

## **Councillor Roger Mace: Portfolio Holder for Internal Affairs**

(Cabinet Member until 3 March 2010)



### **1. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- Lancaster District Chamber Liaison Group (now merged with the Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group to become the Business Liaison Group).

### **2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Board
- North West Rural Affairs Forum
- Lancaster and District Vision Board's Connectivity Steering Group

### **3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

#### **Council Services Oversight:-**

Information Technology and Customer Services  
Legal and Human Resources (until 3 February 2010)  
Revenues and Benefits  
Democratic Services

**Linked to the Corporate Health Performance Indicators CH4, CH5, NI14, CH12, CH13, CH14, NI180, CH15, NI181 in the Corporate Plan:-**

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CH4. % of services where initial access via Customer Service Centres can be either face to face, telephone or web - 2009/10 40%.

CH5. NI14 – Avoidable contact – reduce from 52% (2008/09) to 40% (2009/10).

### Income collection

CH12. - % of in year Council Tax collected

2009/10	96.6%
2010/11	96.8%
2011/12	97.0%

CH13. - % of NNDR collected

2009/10	98.0%
2010/11	98.4%
2011/12	98.5%

CH14. NI180 – Changes to Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit entitlements within the year:

2009/10	12,500
2010/11	12,600
2011/12	12,700

CH15. NI181 – Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events:

2009/10	14 days
2010/11	14 days
2011/12	14 days

## 4. Progress made during 2009/10

### Information Technology and Customer Services

In the past twelve months Information and Customers Services have : -

- Taken over 120,000 phone calls and dealt with 46,000 visitors covering a range of issues from street cleaning to licensing.
- Supported Democratic Services by taking over 2000 initial elections queries in customer services allowing Democratic Services to concentrate upon complex back office functions.
- Consolidated public access points into Lancaster Town Hall to produce annual savings of £23,450
- Worked with Lancashire County Council to provide joined up, face to face services for welfare rights, highways and other services

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- Worked with the third sector such as the CAB and pension service to ensure services are accessible for individuals visiting the Town Halls, providing confidential interview rooms and full office facilities.
- Worked with Team Lancashire and others across Lancashire to change the way that IT is procured leading to a 10% reduction in PC costs
- Worked in partnership with Preston City Council to produce a faster and better way to secure and recover IT systems which has halved disaster recovery costs whilst speeding up recovery.
- Fully implemented the new telephony system leading to more flexible working support.
- Rolled out hotdesking software across the Council – this software will prolong life of PCs and reduce support costs. Complete roll out of power management on all the Council's PCs to reduce consumption. Reviewed power consumption within the Old Fire Station and virtualised servers to assist power saving in server rooms.
- Worked with Council Housing to introduce changes to the Council's alarm system supporting vulnerable individuals in their homes.
- Completed a full review of printing options and a move to multifunction print devices across the entire authority with associated cost reductions of over 10% for printing.
- Supported the Census Pilot by providing high quality addresses.

### **Legal and Human Resources (until 3 February 2010)**

#### **LEGAL SERVICES**

At budget time in 2009, the cost/benefit of maintaining and having a stand-alone legal service was questioned. Last May, I requested an officer report on the possibility of sharing a unified Legal Service either with one or more other Districts or with the County Council under the "Team Lancashire" umbrella. The report is awaited. During the current year, economies amounting to £10k in respect of the in-house legal library have been made in respect of the amount originally in the budget.

Questions were raised during the year on a number of aspects of the City's Legal Services - most recently on the policies affecting the acquiring of and documentation of *external* legal advice, notably the advice obtained "from Counsel". Questions about the policies and procedures for ensuring that "an audit trail" is invariably put in place to the source of external legal advice relied upon by the Council are expected to be referred to the Council's Audit Committee. In my view, a review of these matters will underpin the quality of reports to members.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

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The major priority for Human Resources (HR) during this year has once again been the Fair Pay project. The Stage 1 appeals were completed, and the fair pay package, including the pay and grading structure was finally approved by Council in November. In December, letters were sent to employees confirming their new pay and grading, and seeking their agreement to variations to their contract of employment. Stage 2 appeals were heard in February, and the new pay and grading structure will be effective from the 1st April 2010, the culmination of many years of hard work by HR.

In addition to the considerable workload demands of the Fair Pay project, the Service has provided advice and support for the proposed restructuring of Council services, and in particular for the formation of the new "Community Engagement" and "Regeneration and Policy" Services which will be in place from the 1st April 2010.

Discussion relating to the restructuring of Top Management has also been taking place during the year, and further decisions on this are expected to be brought before members in the near future.

Unfortunately sickness absence within the Council has increased over the course of this year, and HR officers have been working closely with managers to ensure that the Sickness Absence Management Policy is applied consistently, and used as a tool to reduce absence. This will continue, and HR Officers will be reviewing the Policy to make it more effective, and will also be reviewing the provision of Occupational Health advice.

The Service is also responsible for the corporate training plan, and during this year, the roll-out of customer care training for all employees was completed.

### **Revenues and Benefits**

Revenue Services are responsible for administering and collecting Council Tax and Business Rates and for delivering Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit to thousands of local residents on low incomes.

The economic downturn has, not surprisingly, seen Council Tax payers and businesses' facing more difficulties in meeting their commitments and the number of households claiming benefit has steadily grown.

Against this background Revenue Services has performed excellently by improving Council Tax collection rates, meeting its targets in respect of paying the right amount of benefit to the right people at the right time and seamlessly introducing the Business Rates Deferral scheme at very short notice in a year when preparation for the revaluation of all non-domestic properties has taken place.

During the year there have been many changes to implement and the now routine process of continuous improvement has resulted in improved working practices and procedures being implemented that are all designed to improve the service delivered to the users of our services.

This has been achieved with less staffing resources as the Service has, again, made significant efficiency savings in the drive to improve value for money.

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An independently run survey of Benefit claimants has shown that customer satisfaction levels have also been raised during the last three years.

The Service is very experienced in terms of change management and is well placed to contribute to the Council's Shared Service Programme. Officers in the Service have already begun to work together with their colleagues at Preston to begin preparations for shared management of the Revenue Services at the two Councils and improved service delivery at each location.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be some difficult and bold decisions to be made about the future shape of the shared service arrangements it is already clear that significant savings can be made without compromising the excellent reputation that Revenue Services has within the Council, with our customers, our partners and the wider community.

Revenue Services has also had responsibility for the service level agreements with the Citizens Advice Bureaux at Lancaster and at Morecambe. During the year the two Bureaux have announced plans for coming together in a single body - a development which the City Council had been encouraging for many years. Liaison meetings took place with Trustees of the two Bureaux during the year in order to ensure that the Trustees were aware of the budgetary pressures affecting the City Council. In the event, there was no proposal for Bureaux funding from the City Council to be reduced in 2010-11.

A pilot scheme in which a CAB debt advisor worked in a Town Hall office was discontinued after it transpired that despite the apparent greater convenience of access, residents preferred to speak to a debt advisor in a "neutral" location, rather than in a Town Hall.

### **Democratic Services**

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN 2009/10**

The major focus in early 2009 was on the complex elections held on 4 June - the European, County Council and the new Morecambe Parish across a large area of the District as well as a City Ward by-election in Lancaster. The size of the European ballot papers, the sheer numbers of postal votes and the 3 days of Counts, not to mention the last minute hitch of the proposed Count venue in the Ashton Hall being closed on health and safety grounds, all tested the Service to its limits but the hours of careful planning paid off and thankfully there were only election results to report and no disputes. The 'threat' of a General Election continued throughout the year and remains to be resolved in 2010. The new constituency boundaries to come into force at the next General Election will see the Lancaster area returning to be run from Lancaster Town Hall and the extra time to prepare for running two constituencies has been welcome, particularly since we have been without an Elections Officer for a few months of 2009 although this situation is now resolved.

The Service provided support to the shadow Morecambe Parish Council in the early part of the year and then handed over the reins to the newly appointed Morecambe Town Clerk following the elections. It is clear that establishing a new Town Council of this size

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is not an easy task, and the Head of Service continues to be available to provide procedural advice - as is the case for all Parishes.

Also in 2009 the Elections Officer and Service Head have continued to work with the Office of National Statistics and a planned census rehearsal took place in Lancaster in October 2009. This was purely a 'systems' test, and plans are now underway for the real thing in March 2011.

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, particular in view of the cuts made to the budget for 2009/10. Nevertheless events were enhanced and some additions were made to the civic programme to celebrate the centenary of Lancaster Town Hall, using existing mayoral event funds and a contribution from the community engagement budget. The impact of the cuts to the mayoral budget is expected to become more visible during 2010/11, when further cuts come into place. The hosting of the Youth Games in Lancaster during 2009 was disappointingly cancelled but plans are now underway in conjunction with Cultural Services to take a group of children to the Almere Games in 2010.

Member Development has reached a 'plateau', with the number of training sessions reducing and efforts being put more into continuing support, such as with the use of technology and assisting in the recent upgrade of council member laptops and introduction of enhanced security arrangements. Eyes are therefore now beginning to turn towards the next City Council elections in May 2011, and preparations for the periodic increase in the number of training sessions associated with the induction of another set of new members.

J. R. Mace

**Councillor Malcolm Thomas: Portfolio Holder for Finance**

(Cabinet Member until 1 March 2010)



**1. Executive Membership**

- Cabinet

**2. Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc**

- Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership (formerly Northern Reaches SG)

**3. Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

**Council Service Oversight:-**

Financial Services

Property Services

**Links to Corporate Plan – Corporate Health Performance Indicators**

CH1. Keep the city Council element of Council Tax increases to acceptable levels being 4% or less in 2009/10 and in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

CH2. NI179 – Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains (Efficiency/MTFS targets).

CH3. % of property marketed to achieve asset sales to generate agreed capital receipts.

CH10. Use of Resources judgements. Assess targets following 2008/09 judgement.

**4. Progress made during 2009/10**

**Financial Services**

## **Executive Annual Report 2009/10**

2009-2010 has proved to be a challenging year for Financial Services and for the Council's finances generally. Following on from the collapse of the Icelandic banking sector in November 2008 uncertainties have remained over the Council's eventual recovery of invested monies. On a more positive note, the Government's capitalisation directive has provided a way forward for managing the financial impact of estimated potential losses.

The ongoing instability in financial markets and the economic recession, as well as more local issues such as concessionary travel take-up, have presented the Council with some of the toughest financial conditions in many years. The Budget setting has therefore, once again, been extremely challenging but the Council has managed these pressures and achieved its target of setting a basic Council Tax increase of 3.75%, retaining the same target increase for future years.

The Council has updated its various financial strategies to respond to the increasing pressures it faces in activities such as treasury management, capital investment and in providing funding for the provision of day to day services generally. A wide-ranging 'Savings and Efficiency Programme' has been set in motion aimed at improving operational and financial efficiency, the guiding principle being that efficiency savings (which maintain or improve on existing levels of services) take priority over other forms of making savings.

During the year, the Audit Commission scored the Council's 'Use of Resources' at Level 2 – that is 'performing adequately'. Whilst the assessment concluded that sound arrangements were in place for managing finances and governing the business, it does provide the Council with a challenge to improve its level of performance alongside achieving the future targets for Council Tax and – just as importantly- managing the public and other stakeholders' expectations for services standards and delivery.

### **Property Services**

A significant part of the work of Property Services is concerned with the maintenance and repair of Council buildings and land. In recent years a backlog of repairs of the building stock has arisen. The condition of the Council's building stock remains a major concern. Further ceiling collapses have occurred in Lancaster Town Hall in recent weeks. However progress is now being made on a number of major schemes which should be completed during 2010-2011 that will have a significant impact on the backlog of repairs. Over £2 million has been budgeted for repairs of municipal buildings in 20010-2011 and in 2011-2012.

The current economic climate is still having a significant impact on the property market. Capital receipts have proved difficult to achieve during the past year which is a problem for funding the capital programme. The refusal to grant planning consent for the Canal Corridor scheme has resulted in the need to reassess that project with resultant consequences for capital receipts. A Town Green Inquiry on the Council's land at Scotforth has also resulted in delays to the disposal of that land although the outcome of the inquiry has been in the Council's favour.

Some disposals of property have gone ahead successfully, notably the sale of the Lancaster TIC building on Castle Hill, 1 Dalton Square and the Morecambe Town Hall cottage.

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The scheme to develop new stadium facilities for Morecambe Football Club is progressing well and will result in extra sports facilities in the district.

The economic climate has also meant that there has only been slow progress in determining the future of Lancaster Market. Council has been considering the options available for determining the future of the Market which will continue to be an issue in 2010-2011. Conversely the Charter Market and Festival Market have been particularly successful and remain a draw for shoppers in Morecambe and Lancaster, with the potential to extend the number of days on which the Charter Market operates

I am grateful for the help which the officers of both Financial Services and Property Services have given me to carry out my responsibilities in the last year.

Councillor Malcolm Thomas