



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

April 2014

Foreword from the Leader of Council and Chairman of Cabinet	3
Decision Making Arrangements.....	4
Executive Decisions	5
Councillor Eileen Blamire: Leader of the Council - Cabinet Member for Relationships with Other Councils, Communications & Performance Management, Democratic Services, Legal and HR.....	6
Councillor Jon Barry: Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Markets, Connecting with Communities, Voluntary Sector and Older People..... Error! Bookmark not defined.	12
Councillor Abbott Bryning: Portfolio Holder for Finance & Revenues and Benefits ...	15
Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox: Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Property Services	20
Councillor Janice Hanson: Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Planning	28
Councillor Karen Leytham: Portfolio Holder for Housing, Environmental Health and Emergency Planning	32
Councillor Ron Sands: Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People and Culture & Tourism	40
Councillor David Smith: Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services – Community Safety & Clean and Green	49
.....	

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



I am pleased to present the Executive Annual Report for 2014/15.

At the end of another year it is time to reflect on another interesting period. We have lost a significant number of staff and those remaining are feeling the difference. I am grateful to all our staff for their hard work and for the fact that a high level of service is still being provided in spite of severe cuts.

The Budget was balanced, but this meant further savings and some use of balances. Again, I must thank officers for their help and advice in doing this. I also thank other parties for their cooperation during the year. In spite of cuts there have been many successes and things to be proud of for our area. The Council has worked together to maintain our services and our reputation as an Ensuring Council. We all want to see our district as a great and prosperous place to live. One that cares and provides for its citizens and looks after our environment.

Cllr Eileen Blamire

Leader

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.

The Constitution allows for the appointment of up to 10 Executive Councillors. This year the Leader has appointed a Deputy Leader and 6 other members to the Cabinet. Each have an area of responsibility, set out in their entry in the following report.

Executive Decisions

The table below shows the executive decisions that were taken from **May 2013 to April 2014**. 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 Councillor	Executive Decisions			
	Key Decision taken at Cabinet	Non-key decision taken at Cabinet	Individual Cabinet Member Decision	Urgent Business Decision
Eileen Blamire (Leader)	0	5	5	3
Jon Barry	2	4	1	
Abbott Bryning (Finance)	6	1	0	
Tim Hamilton-Cox	7	0	4	1
Janice Hanson	8	3	3	
Karen Leytham	5	2	4	1
Ron Sands	5	4	1	
David Smith	2	2	1	
TOTAL	35	21	19	3

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Eileen Blamire

Leader of the Council

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



Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Business Cabinet Liaison Group
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Shared Revenues and Benefits Services Joint Committee
- Square Routes Centrepiece Cabinet Committee

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies

- Lancashire Leaders Meeting
- LGA Executive

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Service Oversight:

Relationships with other
Councils

Governance
/Performance
Management

Communications

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Develop a programme around the community leadership role of councillors*
- *Prepare and implement electoral reform changes*
- *Meet all accountability and transparency requirements*
- *Work to develop resilience and capacity within communities to improve local areas in ways that matter to local people*
- *Work with partners to develop joined up approaches for Working Together with Families*

Progress made during 2013/14

GOVERNANCE

- **Democratic Services**

In May 2013, the Service administered the County Council elections, together with one City Council by-election. For the last few months of the municipal year, the Service has been preparing for the European elections to be held in May 2014. At the same time, considerable work and training has been undertaken throughout the year in preparation for the implementation of individual electoral registration in June 2014.

During 2013/14, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England completed its electoral review of the district, and the changes to warding arrangements will be in place for the 2015 elections.

The Service has continued to provide support for the meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees.

Officers have also provided support for the work of the Member Champions, and in particular assisted the Veterans' Champion in the drafting and signing of a Community Covenant.

On the civic side, a full programme of Mayoral events took place throughout the year.

- **Human Resources and Performance Management**

A continuing and time-consuming priority for HR this year has been preparing for the implementation of the HR elements of the new HR/Payroll system, which will streamline administrative processes across all services.

Much work has also arisen from service reviews and restructures as a result of the Council's need to make budgetary savings. Officers have advised and assisted service managers throughout the course of these reviews and especially with the consultation process, assimilation and ring-fencing of posts and any subsequent voluntary redundancies.

This is in addition to the day to day support given to managers in all Services. There has continued to be a particular focus on working with service managers to reduce absence through sickness, ensuring that absence matters are handled in a proactive and timely manner and in line with the revised Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure, on which training has been provided to all managers. Building on the success of 2012/13 in reducing sickness absence to an average of 8.78 days per employee, the Council is on target to further reduce absence in the current year.

The HR Officers have continued to support and guide managers in all disciplinary, grievance and capability cases. This support covers investigations, hearings and appeals, including any appeals to the Personnel Committee. The HR Team also manages all Employment Tribunal cases where the Council is named as a respondent, preparing case files in preparation for hearings.

Constant reviews are undertaken to ensure that the Council's HR policies and procedures are up to date. This year has seen revisions to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, Capability and Performance Improvement Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, and Smoke Free Policy.

A training programme has taken place on a wide range of topics to meet the wider corporate needs, including management, and health and safety training sessions. A range of Web based learning programmes are also available to all staff on topics such as information management and safeguarding, and, in conjunction with Skills for Life, staff are able to gain valuable literacy and numeracy qualifications.

The Council continues to provide a range of apprenticeship opportunities.

With effect from January 2014, the Performance Management team has merged with HR, reporting to the HR Manager. It is anticipated that a better link between HR and Performance Management will address any weaknesses in the Council's change management activities, and will ensure an effective management and co-ordination

of the transformation / improvement strategies of the Council. A new Performance Management Framework is being developed, which will build on the reporting and monitoring arrangements and business improvement techniques previously developed by the Performance Management team.

- **Legal and Licensing**

The Legal Service has dealt with a number of high profile legal issues during the year. These have included prosecuting under health and safety legislation in respect of a fatality at a riding stable and successfully defending a judicial review in respect of taxi licensing.

There have been a number of prosecutions throughout the year in respect of benefits fraud, taxi licensing, litter and planning, and the Service has assisted Planning and Regeneration at a number of planning hearings and inquiries. The day to day legal work incorporating debt collection, recovery of rent arrears, council house sales and other property transactions, including sales and leases has continued.

Legal advice is routinely provided for Cabinet and Council reports, and solicitors attend the Licensing Regulatory, Licensing Act Committee and Sub Committees, Planning Committee, and Appeals Committee, and provide legal and procedural advice.

Local land charges have continued to maintain a high standard of service, although the workload and, in consequence, the income, is influenced by the economic climate and the state of the housing market. Like all other local authorities, the Council is still involved in legal proceedings in which personal search companies are seeking repayment of fees for personal searches over a period of years, following a change in the law with regard to fees.

Information management falls within the remit of the Service. This involves overseeing the responses to Freedom of Information and Data Subject Access requests received by the Council, and responding to any subsequent complaints raised with the Information Commissioner.

The Licensing service continues to ensure that licence applications are processed efficiently. This year, under new legislation, the Service has become responsible for administering the new licensing regime for scrap metal dealers.

Taxi licensing work continues to take up the greatest proportion of officer time with the focus being the safety and protection of the public. Taxi Proprietors' Forum meetings with the Licensing Regulatory Committee are now held quarterly, and a Taxi Task Group made up of members of the Committee has been set up to liaise with stakeholders as required.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

The centralised communications and marketing function works closely with all services to develop and implement council marketing and communications plans.

Below is a summary of developments in 2013/14:

E-communications

Development of the council's corporate website continues as we look to move more and more of our communications online. In 2013 it received 360,100 unique visitors, a 5.8% increase on 2012.

The site maintained its three star (out of four) rating from SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Management) and received very favourable feedback. Areas of our site were detailed in their main report as examples of national best practice.

We are seeing an increase in the number of people who access our website via mobile phone and users now account for 21% of our unique visitors.

To capitalise on this increase, a mobile version of the website went live in March 2013, aimed at smartphone users.

The navigation structure and content based on analysis of our most used pages/services from the main site, balanced with the need to keep the site usable and focused on key content.

Exploiting e-channels of communication is a key objective making it easier for customers to do business at times and in ways to suit them, whilst at the same time improving customer satisfaction, communicating in a more cost efficient and timely way.

Media

We provide a one stop shop to answer enquiries from the media – online, locally, nationally and internationally. Increased use of social media channels within the council and by the public has seen a shift towards more online communications, which includes updating Facebook, Twitter and web with news and responding to individual enquiries online.

We also support filming enquiries to attract visitors to the district and 2013 was another successful year. The council facilitated the filming of national TV programmes including Come Dine with Me, Trust Me I'm a Doctor, Dickinson's

Real Deal, Homegrown Holidays featuring Warwick Davis and the Great Antiques Map of Britain.

In addition to increasing the profile of the district, filming enquiries support the local economy through cast/crew/presenters taking up accommodation and spending money in the district.

Partnership working

The council works closely with a range of partners to communicate issues of mutual benefit and interest. One example is the council's involvement with the Turning Tides LOVEmyBeach campaign, which aims to improve water quality in Morecambe Bay.

Council magazine

Your District Council Matters was published twice in 2013/14 but Council has agreed to reduce this to just one per year in future. To reduce postage costs it will be combined with the annual Council Tax billing.

To compensate for the reduction there will be increased emphasis and provision of information online.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Barry

*Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Markets,
Connecting with Communities, Voluntary Sector
and Older People*



Executive Membership

- Cabinet

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies

- Lancaster Community Fund Grants Panel

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Markets
Older People

Voluntary Sector

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Support the provision of more allotment plots*
- *Develop the Festival, Charter and Assembly Room markets to help support their sustainability and viability*

Progress made during 2013/14

MARKETS

The £50,000 allocated in last year's budget to improve markets was /is being spent on-

- Engineering works to improve access to and from the Festival market and to link it better with the Promenade and Central Drive.
- Expert help on how the Council can make best use of the Assembly Rooms in the future to ensure that it remains as a viable attraction for residents and visitors.
- Tannoy system in the Festival market.

At time of writing, there is still a small amount of money available to be spent.

Much work to market the markets as visitor attractions is taking place as is work to attract new stallholders to the markets.

I had a long and very useful discussion with Overview and Scrutiny Committee about whether we should fund heating in the festival market. In the end, we decided not to although we are open to any opportunities from the currently-being-devised renewable energy strategy.

A working group consisting of reps from the Charter market, BID, Lancaster Chamber and led by the Council has been set up to look at how to get the best out of the Charter Market once the square routes work has taken place.

A report on new options for the Assembly Rooms is expected soon. Cabinet asked for options around the concepts of a food emporium, including a posh-ish tea shop and a collectibles market. Various meetings with current Assembly Rooms stallholders have taken place and we have had some written suggestions from them. The overall idea is that the Assembly Rooms should be of a high enough calibre that it forms one of the "visitor attractions" of the city centre – along with places like the Castle, Judges Lodgings and the museum. The Assembly Rooms' garden should also be utilised in any future developments.

OLDER PEOPLE

I met with an organisation that considers the needs of carers and gave them as many contacts as I could (e.g. Marsh Community Centre, Friendship Centre for older people). Other than this, I have been fairly inactive re older people (I've left that to the older persons' champion).

ALLOTMENTS

The brand new Cinder Lane allotments (adjacent to Scotforth allotments) are due to open any time.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR

- Attended the opening of the Cornerstones building – funded by previous City/County money.
- On the grants panel for United Utilities' community fund.
- Member of the panel for the City Council's small grants fund. This is to meet later this month.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Abbott Bryning

Portfolio Holder for Finance and Revenues and Benefits



Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- Shared Revenues and Benefits Services Joint Committee
- Square Routes Centrepiece Cabinet Committee

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Services Oversight:

Financial Services

ICT

Revenues and Benefits

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Meet all accountability and transparency requirements*
- *Develop and implement plans for balancing the 2014/15 budget and beyond*
- *Implement, monitor and review local tax collection and recovery arrangements in response to welfare reforms and other technical changes*

- *Work to deliver increased online service delivery options*
- *Develop skills and the use of ICT to deliver savings, business improvement and efficiencies across the council*
- *Work with partners to prepare for and deliver other future welfare reforms*

Progress made during 2013/14

FINANCE

Responding to the Government's austerity measures and the ongoing year on year reductions in funding has continued to dominate the focus of activity in this area.

With emphasis on making savings but still giving value for money, it was pleasing to report in July of 2013 that there had been an underspending of £446K at outturn for General Fund services in 2012/13, after allowing for a limited number of budgets to be carried forward. It was also encouraging to see that the bulk of the net underspending was attributed to a small number of variances, most of which were one-off and/or related to circumstances arising after setting the Revised Budget. This helps give confidence in the Council's financial monitoring and planning arrangements. The underspending also meant that Balances were higher than previously expected.

Linked to the outturn, the Council's annual accounts and its arrangements for securing financial resilience and value for money were given a clean bill of health by the External Auditors.

Thereafter, the primary focus of work changed from completing the previous year's accounts, to planning for the 2014/15 budget. This is probably still relatively fresh in Members' minds, but during last year we continued to see much change and uncertainty.

This picked up over the summer, with the Government firstly announcing the outcome of its Spending Review. This indicated another 10% real terms reduction in funding for Local Government as a whole. This reduction ultimately fed through into the indicative Settlement for 2015/16 as announced in December – meaning that our longer term funding projections were much worse than originally thought (by around £1.2M).

On top of this, like many other councils the Authority has had to grapple with the complexities of the Business Rates Retention Scheme – and it continues to do so. Our disproportionate exposure to rating appeals means that this has added some further pressure to our already bleak financial outlook and associated risk management.

Right across the Council, however, services have responded really positively to the challenges. Many service reviews have been completed, leading to the Council being

able to avoid any drastic reductions to its provision of services for its communities for the short term.

Coupled with modest council tax increases and prudent planned use of Balances, these measures will also help protect services over the medium term, at least to a degree.

From a Financial Services' perspective, as well as supporting the myriad of other ongoing reviews, the service implemented a new payroll system in 2013/14. It is now streamlining other processes surrounding the system, and working on other measures to make more efficiency savings in financial administration, such as those for ordering and paying for goods. It continues to refine and improve budgetary and other financial information, to help ensure sound financial governance and reporting. In terms of treasury management, cash flow remained healthy and the recent action taken in conjunction with the LGA and other similarly placed Councils regarding Icelandic investments means that the vast bulk of the £6M originally invested has now been recovered. Finally, the recent updates to the treasury strategy for next year should enable some small gains to be made in investment returns, whilst still keeping security of investments as top priority.

All in all, the Council's financial resilience is strong and our financial strategy has worked well, but we must not be complacent. We need to keep challenging our use of resources, if we are to secure financial sustainability and balance our budget for the long term.

ICT

2013/14 was definitely an eventful year in ICT – and not always in a good way - but it is true to say that the service now has a much more robust and secure set up than it had a year ago. This has not been achieved without some pain – for Members, staff and some customers and other stakeholders alike.

The driver for much of the service's efforts of late has been the need to meet security standards for the Government led Public Services Network (PSN). This is being overseen by the Cabinet Office, and it has not been easy to establish a constructive dialogue.

To justify the PSN in more practical terms, the Council needs to meet these standards so that it can process benefit claims, and so that it can implement Individual Electoral Registration effectively.

Early on in 2013/14, the Government allowed more leeway in councils' approaches for gaining compliance but later during the year, it adopted a zero tolerance approach. This, coupled with changing requirements, caught many other councils as well as catching this Authority.

During the recent budget, the Council invested significantly in its ICT infrastructure. This was so that it could reconfigure its set up in order to meet the PSN standards and really good progress has been made. It is expected by the time of this Council meeting, or thereabouts, the Council will be well on its way to achieving compliance and it should then be in a position to link to the PSN around May time.

There is still much more work to be done though, especially around 'remote working' – outside of Council offices.

Looking forward regarding the PSN, organisations such as SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Management) and the LGA (Local Government Association) (LGA) have been actively working with and on behalf of councils, and the City Council will continue to contribute. The aim is for the PSN's security standards to be "proportionate to the business risk and pragmatic in their implementation". This might be a tall ask, but unless something gives, the PSN will end up being a barrier to efficiency and innovation, rather than a tool for their achievement.

Alongside PSN, another major project due to be completed around now is the roll out of Windows 8.1. Although some may have niggles and gripes, the roll out has gone very well in the main and as a result, in Local Authority Windows terms the Council has gone from being a backmarker to a trail blazer in a few short months!

The roll out did have to happen – as from 08 April Microsoft no longer provide support for our old operating system. On a much more positive note, however - and PSN permitting - the changes will allow us to be more efficient, with better ICT control, security and resilience.

So 2014/15 will be about building on our upgraded ICT platform, building staff skills and capacity, and using the technology to help save money and provide a much better, customer focused service. This won't happen overnight, but we're heading in the right direction.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS

The service has had another very challenging and busy year, in implementing some major local taxation and welfare reform changes. Key achievements include:

- The delivery and administration of a new localised Council Tax Support scheme (maintaining support levels for claimants, rather than reducing them). A first year review has also been completed, leading to the continuation of that scheme for a second year. The Council preferred to extend its own local and well-tried Support Scheme, based on the former national provisions.
- The delivery and administration of other welfare reforms including under-occupancy ("bedroom tax") and the benefit cap. Based on recent information, around 600

households were affected by the under-occupancy changes, and around 30 were affected by the benefits cap.

- Managing an increased discretionary housing payments (DHP) budget of £211K, identifying and supporting individuals who have been significantly affected by the welfare reforms.
- The set up and administration of a Business Improvement District (BID), covering businesses located in the Lancaster City Centre area. In addition, it is responding to the myriad of changes being introduced by the Government to help provide greater rate reliefs for various businesses affected by the economy generally or more specific events.

The administration of new (lower) council tax discounts and exemptions for empty dwellings and second homes, together with administering additional liabilities for the owners of empty business properties. These factors helped towards generating extra revenue for local government in this district. For council tax, a surplus of £1M was declared on the Collection Fund, of which £131K was retained by the City Council.

Despite these added administration burdens, the service performs well, processing benefits promptly and accurately. It has also managed to maintain local taxation collection broadly in line with previous years. These are impressive achievements, given also the economic situation and the amount of efficiency savings that the service has delivered – and continues to deliver – each year. Most recent developments include:

- The introduction and roll-out of e-services including e-billing and self-serve facilities for customers, to progress further early in the new financial year. A number of take-up campaigns will follow throughout the year to encourage customers to 'channel shift', to make greater use of these developments to improve cost-effectiveness.

The shared service with Preston continues to generate savings – additional measures of over £100K were identified for each authority in 2014/15, with more in future years – and it continues to operate well, providing a useful platform on which to share information and learn from experience.

Looking forward, the focus is to shape service delivery to manage new government initiatives effectively and to optimise performance in what is likely to continue to be a difficult environment. Government plans for the national implementation of Universal Credit will be monitored carefully, and responded to as appropriate.

After a momentous year of financial stress throughout local government, this authority has risen to the challenges set by central government in a positive way whilst maintaining quality services to its community. It would be remiss of me not to recognise the contribution, hard work and loyalty of our staff in the process and which I am sure all Members appreciate.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Hamilton-Cox

Portfolio Holder for Property Services and Climate Change



Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Service Oversight:

Property Services
Climate Change

Off Street Car Parking
Air Quality

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Promote offshore, wind, renewable energy and bio mass opportunities in the district*
- *Implement energy efficiency measures for council buildings, housing and vehicles*
- *Deliver the energy efficiency measures within the planned and capital programme for council housing*
- *Deliver the collective energy switching scheme*
- *Evaluate and deliver measures to reduce the Council's future energy requirements*
- *Develop the council's Renewable Energy Strategy*
- *Progress joint review of property portfolio in conjunction with Lancashire County Council*
- *Complete the sale of land at South Lancaster*

Introduction

I wish to acknowledge the work and support of the officers in Resources, Environmental Services and Environmental Health. In particular I want to thank Mark Davies, Gary Watson, David Hopwood, Dan Wood and Paul Cartmell for the clarity of their reports and briefing notes.

My aim above all others continues to be to encourage a reduction in energy consumption across the council's operations. Not only does this increase the environmental sustainability of the council's operations, it's about saving to spend on maintaining services to the community as funding from other sources diminishes. It also sets a great example for the rest of community in reducing carbon emissions year-on-year. The emerging strategy for saving energy and creating renewable energy is the flagship project of the portfolio and the first draft will be available later in the spring.

Progress made during 2013/14

CLIMATE CHANGE

(A) ACTIVITY WITHIN THE COUNCIL

Carbon dioxide emissions reductions

2012-13 2.33 %

2013-14 - final data is not available but the evidence to date shows a continuing reduction in emissions.

The data for a sample of council-run buildings show continuing success in reducing energy consumption although the impressive rates of improvement seen up to 2012 are not being sustained. That's to be expected as saving additional kWh of energy gets harder the more that's already been achieved. This is why the energy strategy is so important - in identifying further opportunities. We should not lose sight of the fact that the cumulative reduction in carbon dioxide emissions to March 2013 was 25.35% based on a 2008 baseline, against a target of 34% by 2020. So progress to date is well ahead of that target and everyone who's contributed is to be commended for their efforts.

Solar PV programme - General Fund investments

The solar panels at Salt Ayre were connected up to supply in August 2013 so we have some way to go for a full year's operation in order to compare with the original business case. But the contractor has agreed in principle to a reduction in the final account in recognition of the value of lost output.

At White Lund depot, where there is nearly 2 years' worth of data, the output in 2013-14 was about 5% ahead of the business case and is on course to pay back the capital cost between years 6 and 7; ie either ahead or on target.

Solar PV programme - HRA investments

The HRA capital budget funded installation of solar photovoltaic panels at four Category 2 sheltered housing schemes and at four blocks of council housing flats.

Recently, using the surplus of panels from the original order, 4 off-gas council houses have been fitted with solar PV to help reduce energy costs for tenants; and a further 12 off-gas council houses have been identified for PV installation in 14/15.

Energy strategy

As the original report to cabinet said in December 2012, 'using an Energy Strategy to plan ahead could help:

- reduce carbon emissions;
- lower overall energy costs for the council;
- protect against energy inflation;
- provide valuable income to the council;
- provide [long-term, environmentally sustainable] jobs and growth for the local economy.'

The strategy also serves to demonstrate, in practical terms, the city council's community leadership role in promoting sustainability.

Five groups have been set up within the council to contribute to the draft strategy. They have been gathering evidence and information which will support future plans for: council housing; other council property; the vehicle fleet and the possibility of electric vehicles for some council functions; energy saving; and larger renewable energy projects like wind- and solar-based energy generation. As a preliminary report last October said: 'If the Council is to make the most of this opportunity, it needs to develop a structured and sensible plan, supported by a full financial business case.'

The original invest-to-save reserve approved in 2011 (and enhanced in 2012) is available to support the strategy.

(B) CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY-RELATED ACTIVITY IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Affordable Warmth

Lancaster city council has continued the delivery of affordable warmth activities as funded through the Department of Health (DoH) as part of their Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) funding stream made available in 2012/13. The aim of the funding is for the provision of services which aim to enable vulnerable residents to remain safe, warm, and independent in their own homes. The funding has enabled the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) to deliver their Warm Homes Service which aims to improve health, reduce hospital admissions & reduce the number of cases of excess winter deaths in vulnerable groups throughout the Lancaster district. The WHHP funding has also allowed the council to support debt case work as delivered through the Citizen's Advice Bureau. The HIA also received the remaining Performance Reward Grant funding amounting to £48,260.50 to allow continuation of the 'Affordable Warmth Improvement Programme'. In addition, the HIA received additional funding from Lancashire County Council amounting to £46,285 to continue the provision of the above services and to enable the up-skilling of staff to be able to conduct domestic energy assessments. Through its Warm Homes Service the HIA has helped in excess of 499 residents; and through its work to address affordable warmth in the private-rented sector, the Housing Standards team has helped in excess of 77 residents.

Collective Energy Switching

The Collective Energy Switching pilot, which gave residents the chance to join forces with the council to negotiate and take advantage of cheaper energy tariffs completed on 9th April 2013. However, the low numbers of residents switching energy provider was not sufficient justification in itself to repeat the scheme.

On the other hand, some Lancashire authorities participated in another auction in February 2014. The results from this auction are being analysed and will inform a decision on future participation in a collective energy switching scheme.

Green Partnerships Award

During 2013/14 Lancaster City Council has contributed £2000.00 to the Green Partnership awards for environmental projects, match-funded by the county council. This has seen 18 projects in the district receive awards ranging in size up to £500.00.

(C) ACCOUNTABILITY

Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group

Given that the solar PV programme had largely been installed and the energy strategy had been held up by lack of officer time, the liaison group has not met. The presentation of the energy strategy should see the invigoration of the liaison group.

PROPERTY SERVICES

Organisational change

The shared service with Lancashire County Council has been in place for approaching 2 years now. During the last 12 months a restructure of Property Group was undertaken to improve effectiveness and with a view to it assuming the role of corporate landlord.

Other ongoing organisational improvements include the continuing population of the Council's 'Technology Forge' asset management database and the development and implementation of a property-related health and safety management system. Once completed these initiatives will provide much-improved management information and systems to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Building works

As a direct result of the comprehensive condition survey work undertaken during the latter part of 2012, a significant amount of improvement and maintenance work was identified across the Council's corporate non-housing building portfolio. This work has been prioritised and developed into a 5-year capital programme. The budget approved by Council of £10.637M makes up the 5-year capital programme, of which £2.402M had been assigned to the 2013/14 financial year. The ultimate goal for this investment is to shift the Council from an emphasis on reactive maintenance to a more strategic, planned maintenance regime which will deliver significant potential savings and improve financial planning in the years to come.

The projects are being delivered and managed through the property shared service collaboration arrangements in place between Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council.

Conditions survey

Last year's report described at some length the condition survey which covered 138 properties and monuments. The survey concentrated on those building elements at greatest risk or most likely to fail. The objectives of the survey were to give an overview of building condition and to provide estimated costs of remedial work. The survey classified elements on a scale A to D where D was the most serious:

'Exhibits major deterioration, serious risk of imminent failure or is a health & safety hazard: urgent attention required.'

It is expected that all grade D requirements will have been met in 2014-15.

Property Services is to be commended for its the quarterly reports of capital expenditure.

Commercial land and buildings

At the beginning of the 2013/14 financial year the occupation rate across the city council's commercial buildings was 82%, which was a reasonable position overall when considering the difficult financial climate and lack of demand for office and retail space.

The commercial property portfolio is currently generating circa £450K p.a. in net revenue for the city council.

During the course of the year there has been a slight reduction in the vacancy rate. St. Leonard's House, The Storey and Citylab still account for the majority of the vacant space.

Owing to the very considerable capital investment identified in the condition survey for St. Leonard's House, allied to ongoing operational deficits, and unfortunately but unavoidably from my personal point of view, the city council has issued termination notices to lessees. Many socially important organisations are affected and I have asked that these organisations be assisted to relocate into other council-owned buildings where the organisation wishes to transfer. Working with the Lancashire Regeneration Partnership there is a proposal to redevelop St. Leonard's House as student and young worker accommodation.

The vacancy rate at Citylab has reduced mainly as a result of the letting of House No.4 together with a letting of some accommodation on the ground floor.

The capital receipt for land at south Lancaster was finally received in 2013-14 and a significant receipt may be payable for council-owned land at Nightingale Hall farm if planning permission for residential development is granted.

Heysham Gateway Regeneration Initiative

Following on from the prospects of both investment in energy generation in the area and more direct access to the port from the M6, the city council is working on ways to attract new business to land at Heysham and Middleton.

Both the city and county councils hold a considerable amount of land in the vicinity of the Middleton waste transfer station and both authorities have been working with the Lancashire Regeneration Property Partnership to develop a strategy for these currently under-used assets to ascertain how they can deliver the greatest beneficial impact for the Lancaster district.

A 'Stage 1' report has been prepared and full details will be reported to Cabinet for consideration in due course.

Bailrigg Innovation Park

In 2009 the city council utilised funding from the former North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) to purchase nearly 10ha of land between Bailrigg Lane and Lancaster University to build the Lancaster Science Park. The land purchase was subject to a funding agreement with the NWDA and a number of covenants in favour of the previous landowner (Bailrigg Farm Trustees). Due to various factors including the recession and abolition of the NWDA, the site has yet to be developed. However, the land has the benefit of planning permission for the science park and Lancaster University is now taking the lead role (in partnership with the city and county councils) to develop and deliver a financially viable form of development, which may now take the rubric of 'innovation park'. Progress on the development may involve transferring ownership of the site to the University.

This possibility has led to the city council working with the Bailrigg Farm Trust on a

potential joint disposal of land adjacent to the proposed innovation park. Property Group is currently working with Savills, the Bailrigg Farm Trustees' consultant, on a draft memorandum of understanding, for consideration by Cabinet in due course.

OFF-STREET CAR PARKING

In 2013/14 a revised parking strategy was developed which looks at how the city council's off-street car parking capacity, some of which may be redeveloped for other purposes, might work with the major (some still potential) developments in the pipeline, viz.

- The building of the Heysham – M6 Link Road;
- The new park and ride facility at junction 34 of the M6;
- The potential development of Lancaster Castle as a major tourist attraction;
- The potential retail-led redevelopment of the Canal Corridor North site;
- The opportunity to upgrade Morecambe town centre through the Morecambe Area Action Plan (MAAP).

The provisional out-turn figure for gross (that is before all the running costs have been deducted) parking income in 2013-14 was encouraging in the light of the disruption resulting from the sewer capacity works, with day-time and evening pay and display income totalling £2,186,716 against a revised budget of £2,172,100 and original budget of £2,202,100.

Cabinet approved the introduction of cashless parking and this will be introduced at the end of April. This will allow customers to register for the pay by phone service to buy their parking period avoiding the need for change and with the option to 'top up' from wherever they are and not having to return to the car park.

The capital programme has allocated funding to resurface some car parks with works being scheduled to be carried out on Moor Mills 1 and Dallas Road car parks in Lancaster this month; and works being planned for Pedder Street car park in Morecambe in the summer.

Work has also commenced on reviewing the arrangements for visitor parking in the residents parking zones and this is likely to be referred to Cabinet in the summer. Some preliminary consultation has been undertaken with residents and further consultation will be carried out before recommending proposals to Cabinet. This should make visitor parking more user-friendly and less expensive to administer whilst maintaining control over the use of the permits to avoid unauthorised use.

AIR QUALITY

The council continues to invest significant time and money in addressing its

responsibilities. Three Air Quality Management Areas remain - in central Lancaster, in Carnforth and in Galgate. The AQMAs were declared because the city council expected levels of the traffic exhaust pollutant nitrogen dioxide to exceed one of the government's mandatory air quality objectives.

In 2013 Lancaster adopted an Air Quality Strategy which sets out the current position and a process to support the production of an effective Air Quality Action Plan. The city council has made a start to follow the strategy including consultation and discussion on future local and national planning policy, better communication, establishing partnership working arrangements with the county council and collaborating with the county council's public health function.

The city council is making Air Quality Grant application bids to Defra and has worked with the county council on an application to the Clean Bus Technology Fund. One of these was successful resulting in an award of £30,000. More detailed information on these and other actions is contained in the 2013 Local Air Quality Management Progress Report available at: <https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/air-quality-downloads-links/>

The role of Local Air Quality Management has been under review nationally in 2013, the outcome being that the role of local authorities is still very important. The need for action on air quality has also become more prominent in 2014 following the commencement of EU infraction proceedings against the UK for breach of nitrogen dioxide Limit Values in a number of UK zones. This includes the zone in which Lancaster is located. The health impact of poor air quality is the main reason for action in Lancaster, however the notice of legal action reinforces this continued need. The European Commission has stated that it would like 'to achieve full compliance with existing air quality standards by 2020 at the latest'.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Janice Hanson

*Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic
Regeneration and Planning*



Executive Membership

- Cabinet (Deputy Leader)
- Business Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Square Routes Centrepiece Cabinet Committee

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Management Group of the
Lancaster Business
Improvement District (BID) | • North Lancashire Local
Action Group |
| | • LGA Rural Commission |

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Service Objectives:

Economic Regeneration

Planning

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Develop and deliver planned elements of the Project Management Plan for the national grid infrastructure project*
- *Develop clear land allocation and development management policies for a new nuclear power station in Heysham*
- *Work with the private sector to develop proposals for city centre development in Lancaster*
- *Work with strategic partners to bring forward proposals for a science park adjacent to Lancaster University*
- *Continue to deliver Lancaster Square Routes Scheme*
- *Prepare and agree an area Action Plan for central Morecambe*
- *Develop proposals for connecting the Heysham Gateway*
- *Commence delivery of Townscape Heritage Initiative 2*
- *Planning for sufficient, good quality housing across the district*
- *Complete housing schemes in the West End including refurbishment of empty homes in the Chatsworth Gardens area*
- *Advance the Lancaster District Local Plan to the submission stage*
- *Provide support for delivery of the Lancaster Business Improvement District proposals*
- *Manage delivery of planning decisions on major applications for priority developments including Heysham M6 link, Canal Corridor and Lancaster Castle*
- *Adopt and implement a business plan for the Storey Institute*
- *Develop and deliver inward investment strategy.*

Progress made during 2013/14

ECONOMIC REGENERATION - PLANNING

- This has been a particularly successful year for the City Council in both regeneration and economic development terms. It has seen patience paying off. Development has commenced on several of the districts long term vacant brownfield sites, bringing with it confidence in the return of investment in the local economy. It has been particularly beneficial to get towards the end of major legal

battles over the compulsory purchase of Luneside East with the council facing no liability for higher compensation for the site.

- The work commencing on Lancaster Moor Hospital also provided confidence to our key partner the Homes and Communities Agency that the flexibility the council has shown to help them secure two top quality house builders was entirely worthwhile. The most important set of commencement works relates to the Heysham/M6 Link which after many years of blockages and legal challenges was able to start being constructed early in the New Year. Enquiries by new developers looking for opportunities around Heysham port are already encouraging.
- The production of a new evidence base to set challenging new housing targets for the district was completed in December 2013. It contained good news about the state of the local economy after the long years of recession, but has also provided a warning for the local community about the sustainability of our local economy in future years. There will be a major challenge for the City Council to persuade the community to support an increase in house building, but alongside that remains the need for us to retain control over our future at local level.
- There is plenty of evidence from councils around the country of local plans not addressing future needs being thrown back to them by the Planning Inspectorate, and we all have to keep an eye on the new rules which could take powers to determine large planning applications away from us.
- Work progresses steadily to design a new approach to the Canal Corridor North with English Heritage this time providing close support to the council's planning team in their initial scoping discussions with British Land and Centros. It is hoped that the developers will be in a position to share their thoughts more widely in the forthcoming months.
- At the top of the agenda this year has been a further restructuring of council services to address the serious budget difficulties we face over the next few years. We gave an early commitment not to reduce the capacity we have in our planning and regeneration teams in recognition of the need for the council to be properly equipped to deal with our local economic recovery. To improve efficiency we have developed a much stronger practical working relationship with the County Council and our Chief Officer now sits alongside a County Director on a regular steering concentrating on Lancaster District regeneration initiatives.
- We have acted to address concerns that after our previous restructuring in 2010 we appeared not to engage in economic development activity. We have strengthened the profile of this area of activity by clearly identifying the proactive steps the council takes to engage in the arts, the visitor economy and inward investment activities as an integral part of our economic development function and providing a new lead for this team within the Regeneration and Planning Service.

- In Morecambe we have agreed to provide additional officer support to the Portas Pilot and have worked very hard often against difficult bureaucratic challenges to maintain the commitment of our development partner secured to refurbish the Chatsworth Gardens housing scheme. Our pilot project to address the problem of empty homes has also generated successes in bringing properties back into use. The submission of the Morecambe Area Action Plan to the Secretary of State for examination has also meant that the time is now right to engage with the County Council's private sector development partner to examine how development potential identified in the plan might be delivered. That work is ongoing.
- Let us not forget that the winter of 2013/14 saw the district faced with a number of high profile storm events which demonstrated that the many years of work to build new sea defences and maintain the appropriately paid dividends when they were successful in preventing widespread coastal flooding. We have now also secured the necessary funding to start replacing the ageing wave reflection wall at Morecambe with an improved form of structure.
- The City Council faces the next year with planning issues likely to play a dominant role in our interaction with the local community. The end of the year also saw the emergence of large numbers of people and organisations wanting to support growth and prosperity in the district and it will be important for us all to focus on the requirement for the current generations to consider the needs of our future generations very carefully when grappling with the challenges ahead.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Karen Leytham

*Portfolio Holder for Housing, Environmental Health
and Emergency Planning*



Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- District Wide Tenants Cabinet Liaison Group
- Housing Regeneration Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group
- Health & Wellbeing Partnership

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Service Objectives:

Housing

Environmental Health

Emergency Planning

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Deliver social and affordable housing schemes*
- *Deliver improvements in private sector housing via enforcement and support*
- *Bring empty properties back into use*
- *Deliver the council housing planned maintenance and capital programme*
- *Undertake measures to tackle homelessness*
- *Work with the voluntary sector to reduce rough sleeping in the district and implement the 'No Second Night Out' initiative*
- *Deliver effective environmental health services*
- *Develop strategic health and wellbeing arrangements in the district*
- *Maintain resilience in emergency planning*
- *Planning for sufficient, good quality housing across the district*
- *Work with partners to deliver Warm Homes Initiatives*

Progress made during 2013/14

I would like to say a massive thank you to all the officers and staff who work tirelessly providing the following services that many people aren't aware of or appreciate because we all take so much for granted.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Public Health

- The pest control team has expanded its service for camera surveys, inspecting the insides of drains and sewers, places where rats can break out and cause surface-level infestations both outdoors and inside buildings. Normally costing less than £100, this service is a far less expensive than digging up the ground in the hope of locating a drainage fault.
- The pest control service has been spending a great deal of time bringing under control a serious rat infestation at an abandoned premise on White Lund industrial estate.
- Our Dog Warden service has been kept very busy responding to calls about stray dogs, attacks and fouling. Whilst the vast majority of residents behave responsibly, bagging and binning their dog's mess, a small minority seem determined to leave it and allow other people (adults and children) to suffer the consequences. The council and staff in partner agencies have issued a number

of Fixed Penalty Notices. I ask that we all continue to encourage people to let us know who the culprits are.

- The Environmental Health service focuses on serious dog concerns such as strays, attacks and fouling. However a great response was received from young people to a dog fouling poster competition organised in conjunction with Morecambe Town Council. There were over 800 entries showing how strongly people feel about dog mess.
- Licences for home boarders have been introduced to maintain the good standards that already exist and to drive improvement if it becomes necessary. This will offer reassurance to our many caring dog owners that their pets are in safe, licensed hands. The response to this new licensing has in most quarters been very positive and we hope that the results will speak for themselves.
- Perhaps as a result of economic conditions, there has been a significant increase in demand for Public Health services such as cleansing of 'filthy & verminous' homes. Our staff are increasingly involved with vulnerable people in our community and we are strengthening relationships with various partner agencies to promptly deal with new problem premises.
- In one long standing case, repeated legal action has had to be taken against a persistent bird feeder in Morecambe who causes nuisance and disturbance to his neighbours. Previously issued with an ASBO, the person in question has now received a suspended sentence. Whilst it is disappointing that this should be necessary, the council is determined to tackle unacceptable anti-social behaviour.

Environmental Protection

- It has been another busy year for our team dealing with neighbour and commercial noise and vibration complaints. Noise monitoring equipment has frequently been offered to help residents obtain evidence of nuisance enabling formal action to be taken, including service of an Abatement Notice or even forcing entry to an empty property to turn off a long-running interior alarm.
- At the same time, our Environmental Health teams have vetted hundreds of new planning and licensing applications aiming to identify and prevent possible noise and pollution problems before they start.
- Officers are reporting an increase in cases where residents dump and accumulate household rubbish or dog waste in their back yards, gardens and alleyways. In addition to making public places unhygienic and unsafe to walk in, this has led to a number of smell and vermin problems for which formal action is taken.

Food Safety

- Officers have investigated 341 cases of infectious diseases ranging from home-cooking causing food poisoning to winter-time outbreaks of highly infectious Norovirus. We work to find common causes of disease transmission and minimise the risk of passing them on.
- We have responded to over 500 service requests in 2013/14 relating to food standards, safety and quality.
- A programme of shellfish and commercial food sampling is carried out to assess safety and identify any health risks to the public.
- 510 food businesses have been inspected, unannounced, to check hygiene and food safety standards are being maintained. This has resulted in service of 13 improvement notices. Customers will now be familiar with the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme stickers displayed by many businesses, rating the business from 0 (Urgent Improvement required) to 5 (Very Good). 95% of our food businesses were assessed as “broadly compliant” with food safety law at the time of unannounced inspection – look out for a sticker showing a rating of 3 or higher. Food Hygiene ratings are made for the majority of all food retail businesses and the current ratings are available to view on the FSA website - <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/>
- The Council has responsibilities to monitor activity at the two Ports within the Lancaster area – Heysham and Glasson. This includes sanitation inspections of ships visiting the ports and monitoring food products brought into the country. 21 sanitation inspections of ships have been completed this year.

Health and safety at work (and for customers)

- There is a legal duty to report workplace accidents and there has been an increase in the number of serious workplace accidents for investigation, these have included serious injury, hospitalisation and fatal accidents.
- In December 2013 the case was concluded of a prosecution brought by the council as a health and safety enforcing authority against duty holders under the Health & Safety at Work Act. Preston Crown Court found them guilty of failures some of which led to the death of a livery yard customer in May 2011 and an eight month suspended prison sentence was imposed on one duty holder.
- 9 improvement notices and 7 Prohibition notices have been served under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in the 2013/14 financial year.

Emergency Planning and Response

The council's volunteer Duty Emergency Incident Officers and Senior Emergency Officers have been kept busy with a range of emergency incidents and multi-agency emergency planning exercises, including a routine off-site exercise involving Heysham nuclear power stations in February. The council's emergency arrangements to care for people's needs and concerns during an incident were tested on a number of occasions with good reports from independent observers. Several winter flood and severe weather warnings have been received which saw council resources being put on standby and storm boards installed.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING and CEMETERIES

- The Housing Standards team increased their work on reducing fuel poverty during 13/14 by continuing to employ an officer funded through external funding to target vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector. The Warm Homes Service has continued throughout the 13/14 winter months. This service is funded by Lancaster City Council and the County Council's Public Health to help vulnerable residents stay warm over the winter. The Home Improvement Agency provides practical solutions to help vulnerable residents keep their homes warm at an affordable level over the winter period.
- Unlawful and retaliatory evictions continue to be a problem, so links are being improved with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to address this.
- The option of introducing Selective Licensing into the West End of Morecambe is being explored, with a view to presenting to Cabinet in 2014.
- The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) has continued to enable vulnerable residents to remain independent, safe, secure and warm in their homes. In addition the HIA continues to provide a number of bolt on services for vulnerable residents including the Sanctuary' and 'Haven' service, completing security works to the homes of 'at risk' clients suffering Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Violence in partnership with the Homeless team.
- Homeless acceptances are being maintained at the same levels as in the previous year and successful prevention cases continue to prevent homelessness. The service is still facing challenges with the welfare reforms, with the impacts of reductions in housing benefits for the under 35's, benefit cap and the under occupancy reduction in benefit. We continue to manage the increase in presentations following the implementation of the single room rent rate for the under 35's with the assistance of the 2 homeless prevention officers looking at shared accommodation and supporting people to maintain their existing accommodation The homeless prevention work continues to be delivered "in

house” with a substantial saving and an increased number of positive outcomes for single non priority need homeless and rough sleepers.

- The delivery of a local Refuge is now complete and has been operational since April 2013. It provides 7 units for families fleeing domestic violence.
- Temporary Accommodation (TA) targets remain below government targets – currently there are 7 available TA properties available within the district.
- In October 2012 the Council, in partnership with North West Methodist Action, launched the new “Social Lettings Agency”. The Social Lettings Development Coordinator is situated within the Housing Options team with the aim of increasing access to good quality private rented sector accommodation for homeless households. 30 properties have now been leased from private sector landlords with further properties in the pipeline as part of the empty homes programme. This scheme will give the local authority access to a sustainable supply of good quality housing with 2-10 year lease arrangements.
- Choice Based Lettings are now well established within the housing options team to support the delivery of choice based lettings and the feedback we’ve received has been very positive. Customers have now fully embraced the new on-line application procedure with limited disruption or complaint. Staff also offer home visits and drop-ins to assist customers with on-line applications and where appropriate can offer assisted biddings for those who are unable to bid for themselves due to various circumstances.
- Consultation is almost complete to review the Council’s allocation policy. The main changes to the existing Allocations Policy will focus on Local Connection, Armed Forces applicants and the effective allocation to those most in need.
- The DCLG have made a small amount of funding available to roll out the governments ‘No Second Night Out’ (NSNO) initiative across Lancashire. Lancaster City Council joined the national scheme in December 2012 which aims to make it easier for people sleeping rough to get the help they need. Street Link is a new simple scheme that helps members of the public to quickly connect rough sleepers to local services. Locally, this scheme has worked very well.
- Following a successful bid to the Homes and Communities Agency work is currently progressing to identify a preferred provider to build a new homeless hostel for rough sleepers/entrenched homeless. Revenue funding for the project has now been secured with a build completion date of December 2014. Planning approval has now been obtained with contractors on site. The project will consist of a total of 23 units which include crisis, move on and self-contained units and will deliver a wide range of on-site services including health, drug alcohol, training, education and in work support.
- Portland Street opened in September 2013 providing a small interim project for rough sleepers/single homeless with complex needs. This will be operational until the new scheme is opened in April 2015. The project has been full since opening with demand exceeding supply. Portland Street also operates a small “sit up”

service for up to 3 people at any one time to assist with short term shelter (usually up to 3 nights) to facilitate reconnections and move on to supported accommodation

- A review of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 has been completed following extensive consultation and will be presented to Cabinet in early 2014/15 for approval.
- The Cemeteries Service was successful in achieving the Green Flag Award for Morecambe Cemetery and Morecambe Parish Church for a fourth year running with Torrisholme Cemetery gaining a Green Flag for the sixth year.

COUNCIL HOUSING

General

In October 2013 the council undertook a tenant satisfaction survey. Overall satisfaction with the council as a landlord remained at similar levels as reported in 2011/2012 with 83% of tenants being satisfied with the overall service, 84% being satisfied with the quality of the home, 84% satisfied with value for money for rent, and 79% satisfied with repairs and maintenance.

Quality of Accommodation

The council continues to invest in its existing homes to ensure that the needs and expectations of existing and future tenants are met, and the 'decent homes' standard is maintained. 2013/2014 saw approximately £4.8 million being invested in the council housing capital programme. We have now seen the start of a much needed programme of investment to improve the communal areas of blocks of flats on the Branksome estate. This has been well received by residents. The council has also been able to start a pilot programme to tackle unpopular bedsits in its sheltered housing schemes and a programme to improve the energy efficiency of some of its off-gas properties in the rural villages using solar panels. This again has been well received by tenants.

Cabinet in November 2013 agreed to establish a programme to start building new council housing and that the council would work with the Lancashire Regeneration Partnership. This work is on-going and detailed proposals will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and approval. The focus of this initial programme will be to target the one bedroom housing shortage that has been identified.

Allocations and Lettings

2013/2014 has again seen an increase in the number of properties available to re-let. It is predicted that over 400 households will have been re-housed by the council over the year.

The demand for council housing remains high with over 2900 applicants. Those in greatest need in Band A Emergency Housing Need and Band B form 8% of the register. The number of applicants in Band C Medium Housing Need 32% with the greatest proportion of applicants in Band D Low Housing Need and Band E Very Low Housing Need forming just over 60%.

The highest demand for accommodation is for one and two bedroom properties.

Neighbourhood and Community

The tenant satisfaction survey undertaken in October 2013 showed that 35% of the tenants surveyed believed that their neighbourhoods had improved, with 46% feeling that it had stayed the same. The number one issue for tenants was concern about rubbish and litter in their neighbourhood. Car parking on estates was the next most frequently mentioned issue and this was followed by noisy neighbours and disruptive children/teenagers.

Preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour, working together with residents and other agencies on the council's estates remains a high priority. The housing management team have dealt with over 200 new cases during 2013/2014. The greatest number of complaints related to noise nuisance, verbal abuse, pets, and untidy gardens.

It is extremely important that we continue to work with other agencies to tackle these issues. The council is represented on a number of partnership groups, for example, the Multi-Agency Partnership Team (MAP), the Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conferences (ASBRAC), the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC - the main aim of the MARAC is to support the highest risk victims of domestic abuse in their area) and the Prolific and other Priority Offenders Group (PPO).

The annual council housing garden competition continues to be popular with tenants and leaseholders, and again the standard of entries in 2013/2014 was extremely high. All those who took part were invited to a presentation to celebrate their success and achievements.

Rent

The council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is self-financed primarily from income received in rent. This covers all the day to day expenditure for providing council housing including the costs of maintaining and improving the housing stock.

2013/2014 did not see any increase in rents for tenants with a 0% increase being set by Cabinet in January 2013.

Cabinet has recently set an average rent increase of just 1% for 2014/2015 and has adopted a policy that for the years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 the average rent increases be set at 2% and 3% respectively. This should ensure that the future funding needs of council housing are met in the medium term.

The council remains vigilant in monitoring the impact of the government's welfare reforms. Universal Credit still remains to be introduced.

Tenant Involvement

The council continues to improve on engaging with tenants in the setting and the delivery of council housing services. Again, this year the District-wide Tenants' Forum and the various Tenant Quality Groups have worked with the council and have looked at a number of aspects of the service including void property management and the choice based letting system. A number of tenants have attended external training on scrutiny. It is pleasing to note that the District-wide Tenants' Forum and Overview and Scrutiny Committee are looking at each other's work and the Forum is attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April.

The district is now represented on the Association of Retained Council Housing National Tenant Representation Panel by the chairperson from the District-wide Tenants' Forum. There continues to be very active sheltered housing groups and individual sheltered housing schemes have taken part in many activities. Yet again Kingsway Court was successful in obtaining recognition from Britain in Bloom as a result of the efforts residents have made in looking after the communal gardens.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor Ron Sands

Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Tourism



Executive Membership

- Cabinet

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc.

- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Historic Towns Forum
- Museums Advisory Panel

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Services Objectives:

Leisure

Culture and Tourism

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Provide leisure facilities*

- *Work with public sector partners to deliver health and leisure activities for children and young people and older people*
- *Deliver positive leisure activities for young people*
- *Work with partners to support the Children's Trust Board and partnership and develop a Children and Young People's Plan for the district*
- *Work with partners to develop and deliver events and festivals throughout the district*
- *Work with partners to deliver a tourism branding strategy for the district*
- *Continue to work with Lancashire County Council to develop a future approach for Museums provision in the district.*
- *Work with the Duchy to develop proposals for the viable use of Lancaster Castle*
- *Work in partnership to develop and deliver a tourism marketing plan for the district and its attractions, particularly focussed on staying visitors*
- *Encourage film and broadcast companies to the district*
- *Support arts in the district working with the Arts Partnership.*
- *Plan and deliver the Velocity Cycle Race*
- *Host the international Youth Games*

Progress made during 2013/14

My portfolios contain a greater number of so-called 'discretionary services' compared with other services. I have chosen the term 'so-called' advisedly since these matters are nevertheless essential to the Council fulfilling the promises of much of our Corporate Plan. Indeed all of the four priorities in the Plan are especially relevant - Health & Well-being; Economic Growth, Community Leadership; and Clean, Green Spaces.

In these times of unprecedented local government financial pressure and major staff reductions it behoves us to recognise the outstandingly impressive contribution that our staff (at all levels) make to the day to day operation of the council. In recent years there have been significant departures of experienced and long-serving staff that will not be replaced. There has been, too, a considerable number of changes to job descriptions at all levels. Portfolio holders like myself have frequent opportunities to be grateful to our most senior members of staff with whom we enjoy almost daily contact. And they in turn are served by essential and dedicated support teams. In this regard the many financial savings we have made will not be without consequences, and the goodwill of staff in these times of great change is incalculable and very much appreciated.

So I am grateful for the opportunity this report provides to acknowledge the council's immense debt to our workforce. It often seems that the public whom we serve expect more and more from fewer and fewer resources.

So my mantra remains the same: the services described here may be designated 'discretionary', but they are also absolutely essential if we are to uphold the high reputation of Local Government in England.

Leisure - Salt Ayre Sports Centre

- **International Youth Games – 2014 in Lancaster**

The Games took place in Lancaster after an absence of 8 years and saw 400 young people from Lancaster and it's twin towns of Rensburg, Almere, Aalborg and Lublin take part in a range of sports including:- athletics, badminton, golf, swimming, table tennis, tennis and rowing. Disability sport was included for the first time and there was also a comprehensive music and dance programme that culminated in a closing ceremony that took place at a transformed Salt Ayre Sports Centre. Social media was a key feature for the first time this year and films made throughout the week were also on show. Lancaster proudly topped the medal table with 70 Gold, 100 Silver and 95, Bronze.

The sports centre continues to offer sporting and physical exercise opportunities to the community of all ages and abilities. Swimming lessons at Salt Ayre, Carnforth, Heysham and Hornby swimming pools engaged with in excess of 600 young people following the amateur swimming association learn to swim programme. Numerous health and fitness classes continue to offer physical activity at all times of day with the passport to leisure (Go Card) continuing to offer activities to those less able to afford at reduced rates.

- **Active Health Programme**

The scheme funded by Lancashire County Council public health continues to achieve impressive results and has recently received additional increased funding for a further two years. Staff have been trained in offering support for those with cancer in addition to tackling conditions such as obesity and coronary heart disease. Customer feedback has remained high.

Sport & Physical Activity Team

- **City Centre Cycle Race**

Building on the success and enthusiasm of the first year, this year the second City Centre Cycle race held in Lancaster. Better weather than the previous year saw hundreds of people watch the three top class races around the unique course. The partnership with British Cycling, Cycling Development North West and local clubs enabled a successful event with over 100 competitors. Feedback from visitors to the event and local businesses was extremely positive.

- **Children and Young Peoples Holiday Activities**

During the April (Easter), Summer, October and February school holidays, exciting programmes were offered at Salt Ayre Sports Centre, Community Pools, Williamson Park and Happy Mount Park. Arts, museums and community partners were also included in the programme. Over 2000 places were available during the year with more family activities included. Satisfaction levels remain at over 90%.

- **Playschemes**

Local partners were commissioned for the third year to deliver play schemes. 5 Playschemes were delivered by community organisations including Marsh Community Centre, CEEP (Connect, engage, empower and participate) and Fylde Coast YMCA on the Ridge, Marsh, West End, Heysham and Skerton Areas. These successful schemes were again oversubscribed and had waiting lists.

- **Be Active funded projects/ Sportivate funding**

The Council was successful in securing Big Lottery funding worth £70,000 over the next 2 years to deliver and commission community based sport and physical activity projects in a variety of settings. The project will deliver against 5 outcomes including an increase in physical activity levels and fitness levels, weight loss, improvement in strength, co-ordination and mobility of older peoples, mental health and wellbeing and a reduction in social isolation. The Council coordinates the 11k funding coming into the district aimed at attracting young people into sport.

- **Disability Sport**

This area of work is ever expanding. The team currently delivers 2 cycling sessions, 1 multi-sport and 1 football session per week for adults with learning disabilities. Around 80 people per week plus carers are involved. Lancaster lightning is now established and is entering the Cumbrian disability football league. Salt Ayre Sports Centre is now the home to Lancaster Bulldogs Wheelchair Basketball Club. With Council support, the club have just received £10,000 from Sport England to help purchase new chairs and equipment

- **Leadership training**

A number of sport leadership courses throughout the year have been delivered in primary and secondary schools across the district. The course enables young people to deliver activities in schools and community settings. Over 150 young people successfully completed courses this year.

CULTURE & TOURISM

- With intense pressure on the City Council's budget this year a major concern had to be whether the council could continue to engage in a wide range of activities which albeit very valued by the community, are entirely discretionary to provide. These include funding the arts, providing entertainment venues, and even our basic activities involved with marketing the visitor economy. Our early work proved that despite these being discretionary they make an important contribution to the local economy and for this reason they have all been relocated into the Regeneration and Planning service as part of our economic development function.
- Although the council has been able to make the case to continue funding these activities for now, we have looked at making efficiencies and work will be underway to reduce costs in a number of areas. Whilst we won't be able to run as many events this year we have committed to supporting the high profile Vintage by the Sea festival in partnership with Wayne Hemmings and to provide the Light up Lancaster festival in November.
- The Storey Institute after its recent difficulties now finds itself under new management and already we have seen encouraging new interest in using the building, with consequent benefits for income generation. We have also taken valuable time to investigate how best the Dukes Theatre might consider improving its offer and preparing for integrating the Grand Theatre, The Dukes, and the Musicians Coop into the Canal Corridor North development.
- A major success has been agreeing an Arts Strategy with the Lancaster Arts Partnership and the County Council. This recognises the need for all those seeking financial assistance and support to demonstrate how they contribute to the local economy. Ongoing work with the County Council and Preston City Council is taking place to examine how we will continue to provide a museums service.
- There has been tremendous enthusiasm associated with the work done to establish new visitor and inward investment brands for the district. Rarely do we easily find consensus in the district but in this area two very clear brands for Lancaster City (incorporating Bowland and the Lune valley) and Morecambe Bay found widespread support. As the year closes there are distinct working groups working hard to establish firm identities for the brands to prepare them for promotion. In this work we are closely supported by Visit Lancashire, Visit Cumbria and a number of other local authorities around the bay.

- Lancaster Castle is now being managed by the Duchy of Lancaster and is slowly building a reputation for itself as a visitor attraction. Time must be taken to carry out very sensitive repairs to these historic buildings in forthcoming years whilst at the same time the Duchy will consider how best to develop its potential. In the meantime we continue to ensure that the Duchy and its operating partners in the Castle enjoy close working relations with our visitor marketing officers.
- The Arnsdale/Silverdale AONB has been updating its Management Plan for the area to ensure that it takes into account the very latest legislative requirements for the maintenance of this special landscape. The AONB Unit which is hosted by the City Council has also been playing a significant role in the implementation of projects associated with the Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area a significant national initiative. The AONB also has close links with the Morecambe Bay Partnership and their Headlands to headspace initiative which will also see a major arts exhibit taking place in Morecambe this summer.

Events

Events which were operationally delivered by the council in 2013 (as well as marketed) included:

- Morecambe Sandcastle Festival,
- Morecambe Seaside Festival (Estimated 16,000 visitors and generated £281,000)
- A season of Brass Bands in Happy Mount Park within support from HMP Catering Ltd.
- Lancaster's Fireworks Spectacular which is now part of Light up Lancaster (estimated 19,850 visitors generating £258,000).

2013 also saw the development, delivery and marketing, in partnership, of the following:

- Lancaster Unlocked – Involving over 10 venues celebrating the Georgian history of Lancaster.
- Velocity City Centre Cycle Race – following its debut in 2012 as part of the Olympic Torch relay weekend.
- Kite Festival – funding and support

Our thanks must also go to Morecambe Town Council for £15k support towards the Morecambe Seaside Festival and various other sponsors for direct or in-kind support.

The council has continued to support internal and external event organisers where possible and sits on the Emergency Safety Advisory Group for the district.

Visitor Information Centres

A positive year for the Visitor Information Centres with Lancaster VIC showing an increase of 22% in the number of visitor enquiries in 2013 with the second half of the year performing particularly well, Morecambe VIC enjoyed a healthy 10% increase in visitor numbers in the peak Summer months compared to 2012.

Both centres have expanded their range of commissionable ticketing services, selling tickets for various events at Lancaster Royal Grammar School and at The Winter Gardens, Morecambe. Morecambe VIC continues successfully to be the box office for The Platform alongside Lancaster VIC who manage the on-line sales of ticketing and giftware items

This year the staff at Lancaster VIC have expanded their role of reception service for all The Storey businesses by offering a 'meet and greet service' to event organisers and their clients, as well as promoting and supporting the programming within the building. The centre was delighted to support the opening of Lancaster Castle in the Summer and took the decision to extend the opening hours to 7 days a week in the peak Summer months.

Morecambe VIC has played a pivotal role in supporting and promoting the Council's flagship festival this year, VIC staff were based in a Visitor Information Marquee during the festivals providing information, selling tickets and launching the latest Cedric Robinson book. A record number of enquiries were dealt with and staff assisted with Festival feedback forms as well as selling a range of Morecambe bespoke gifts and souvenirs.

The VISIT card, exclusively available from the VICs welcomed Lancaster Charter Market and Morecambe Festival Market into the scheme with many of the staff holders joining and offering discounts on their products.

Tourism marketing and development

In addition to the branding working groups, we have worked in partnership with Marketing Lancashire, Lancaster Arts Partners, AONBs, museums, the Universities and Bay Tourism Association in the development and delivery of various campaigns -

Highlights include:

- Producing the official visitor guide for the area (subsidised by advertising) which was produced with two alternative front covers, each promoting Morecambe Bay and Lancaster City.
- Supporting a forum which co-ordinates district wide activities in the run up to the First World War commemorations.
- Lancashire Witches Weekend held at Lancaster Castle. Working in partnership with the castle and LITFEST and Stepping Stones Charity a weekend of activities

- was delivered including a reading from the towers using extracts of the Pendle witches trial.
- University open days – we have worked in partnership with both Lancaster University and the University of Cumbria recruitment and welcome departments on activities including visit days (with pop-up stands), arrival days and freshers' fairs (facilitating historic guided tours on the visit days around Lancaster City Centre). We have also worked with the University ward councillors to forge closer links to assist with fireworks daytime activities, and with the Lancaster Arts Partners to promote the district's Arts offer to students.
 - Morecambe Heritage Day – Held as part of Heritage Open Days after the Seaside Festival, the Bradford to Morecambe Car Rally and Vintage Village Hall and Tearoom (based at the Platform) presented a good display despite the horrific weather experienced on the day.

Film Enquiries

We have continued to work hard in encouraging filming in the district and for owners of potential new film locations to open their doors to the film industry. Much has been achieved this year in linking up with Lancaster Castle to increase filming opportunities at this fabulous location.

We also continue to promote ourselves as the initial point of contact for direct enquiries from production companies, TV channels and work in partnership with national specialist agency in the field, Creative England, to signpost the makers of major full length feature films our way.

This year, we have played an integral role in paving the way for seamless filming for the following programmes:

Discovery Channel Canada – Mighty Ships
Channel 4 – Come Dine with Me
BBC2 – Trust me I'm a doctor
BBC1 - Put your money where your mouth is
ITV - Dickinson's Real Deal

Visitor Website

2013 welcomed 216,300 unique visitors to the website, which practically equalled the 2012 total of 216,538 visitors. The previous year had shown a significant increase on unique visits but the levelling off of this can be mainly put down to more visitors viewing our destinations on Marketing Lancashire's website as they are now ranked above us for certain keywords on popular search engines like Google.

Executive Annual Report 2013/14

Councillor David Smith

Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services – Community Safety and Clean & Green



Executive Membership

- Cabinet

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|--------|
| • Lancashire Partnership | Waste | • Community Partnership | Safety |
|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|--------|

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Service Oversight:

Environmental Services Community Safety Clean and Green

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

- *Support Community Safety Partnership and new arrangements around Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's)*
- *Support provision of Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in the district*

- *Deliver the objectives of the Lancashire Waste Strategy 2008-2020 to increase amount of household waste re-used, recycled and composted*
- *Deliver actions to reduce the fuel consumption of council fleet*
- *Work with partners to deliver services that keep our streets clean and safe*
- *Implement agreed actions for public realm with an emphasis on street cleansing and improvement of open spaces*
- *Improvements to parks and open spaces*

Progress made during 2013/14

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES – COMMUNITY SAFETY – CLEAN AND GREEN

The main focus for the year has been how to respond to greatly reduced ongoing spending by the Government on the public sector.

There are direct impacts which will be outlined further on but also many indirect impacts. Reduced budgets available to the other public sector organisations like the Police, County Council, Fire and Rescue, Probation Service, Canal and River Trust etc have significant impacts on the portfolio areas for which I have responsibility. These impacts will only be magnified as time goes on.

In terms of dealing with this I have working with both Members and officers on:-

- 1) Managing public expectation- much work has been taking place to achieve this to try and get across the message that we all have part to play in keeping our District a good place to live and that importantly the City Council can only do so much with the limited resources it has.
- 2) Reviewing the City Council's approach to delivering the Public Realm services for which it is directly responsible (e.g. cleansing, grounds maintenance, highways maintenance, open space management) to ensure that they are being delivered in the way that best meets the needs of the Council and our residents in the future. This has resulted in the majority of the Council's public realm functions now being delivered through Environmental Services. It has also resulted in a significant restructure will save the Council an estimated £200K per year. These savings haven't been made by reducing waste, cutting fat or indeed cutting service levels. They have been made through looking at what the priorities for the Council are and likely to be, looking at what resources are available, looking at what service levels we can realistically provide and designing the service around that.

- 3) Ensuring that we work closely at all levels with the County Council, Police and other key partners to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way and that any potential indirect impacts of public sector cuts are minimised.
- 4) Ensuring that as far as possible the services we deliver add value to the local economy. The fact that the majority of our services are delivered in-house contributes significantly to this and the 'ensuring Council' approach adopted by the Council will continue to do so.
- 5) Making sure our workforce understands the challenges the Council faces and also is fully involved in helping shape the way services are delivered.

The following specific items are noteworthy-

- Current actual recycling figure is 46.4%. This demonstrates a positive result at a time when nationally the trend is a downwards one.
- 2012/13 crime figures were the lowest for 4 years. In 2013/14 there was a 7.4% increase in all crime. However incidents of anti-social behaviour (includes personal and environmental) had decreased by 6.3% on the 2012/13 figure. High impact acquisitive crime, road collisions and domestic abuse are areas of activity for the Community Safety partnership.
- Added value from working with partners on specific public realm projects eg- Street Pride, Community Payback, which have all been well received.
- Continued delivery of some Highways Maintenance services for County Council. We are the only District to do so.
- Delivery of a number of public realm services (e.g. mowing, weed spraying) on behalf of the County Council. This operational model has worked well and works for both the County and Parishes.
- The trade waste collection service continues to do well and was able to provide a much needed service when one of the private sector providers in the area suddenly ceased to trade.
- Lucas Benson our vehicle maintenance apprentice was nominated as a finalist in the national APSE apprentice of the year awards.
- Several of our Grounds Maintenance staff took part in the 170 mile Way of the Roses bike ride and raised a significant amount of money for the Mayor's charity.
- We supported a number of community groups e.g. Friends of groups, allotment associations. This in turn enabled them to raise funds and deliver projects that are valued by our residents and visitors.

- Provided immediate response following storms that affected the District on several occasions. Tree gangs worked all night and the promenade and other roads were immediately cleared of debris to allow roads to be quickly reopened.

Finally could I take this opportunity to thank Mark Davies and his team for their help and advice over the past year. Also a big thank you to all the workforce at City Contract Services for their endeavours in what has been and will continue to be trying times given the increased work load and diminishing resources.

Thanks also to other member of staff in all council departments and the help and advice from Democratic Services.