



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Executive Annual Report 2014/15

April 2015

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Foreword from the Leader of Council and Chairman of Cabinet



This is the last of the four annual reports in the last session of our Council. We have a lot to be proud of and a lot still to do. Performance Management has been good in spite of four years of unprecedented austerity. Our relations with other councils, with the University, the County Council and other bodies has been very worthwhile. These things will be even more necessary in the future if Local Government is to be more than just a vehicle to provide basic services and never to seek to improve our area or to provide more jobs and growth. We need to be ambitious but always seek to provide value for money. There is more to life than our statutory services.

My sincere thanks go to our much reduced workforce and to our senior managers who make savings all year round, but still have ambitions to improve.

Thank you all.

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 2014 to March 2015**. 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)	3	3	5	2
Jon Barry	1	5	0	0
Abbott Bryning	7	2	2	0
Tim Hamilton-Cox	7	0	1	0
Janice Hanson (Deputy Leader)	6	4	4	1
Karen Leytham	6	1	3	1
Ron Sands	3	1	0	0
David Smith	1	2	0	0
TOTAL	34	18	15	2

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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
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Shared Revenues and Benefits Services Joint Committee

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- Lancashire Leaders Meeting
- LGA Executive

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Relationships with other Councils
Communications

Governance/
Performance Management

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership •Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrate good governance, openness and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Improve neighbourhood working by engaging with communities to understand their needs and empowering them to deliver services locally•Ensure Ward Councillors feel supported in their Community Leadership role•Continue to improve customer service, reduce waste and improve effectiveness through collaborative working with partners and service •Deliver quality services through a skilled and motivated workforce supported by learning opportunities and ways of working that are accessible to all•Improve standards of equality and diversity•improve our understanding of the needs of our communities and provide equality of access to our services and employment opportunities

Progress made during 2014/15

GOVERNANCE

❖ Human Resources and Organisational Development

Since the formation of Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD) in early 2014, opportunities for real benefits have been gained from a better alignment of the business critical support functions of human resources, organisational development and performance management. Support for customer focused business improvement and change management in key service areas is helping to develop a skilled and flexible workforce and the sustainable delivery of efficient and effective operations and services.

An Investment in People Assessment (IIP) in July 2014 determined that current arrangements and plans meet national standards for effective performance management and leadership, employee engagement and continuous improvement. The assessment provided recommendations to support the council as it continues to evolve in a period of immense change.

The Service has also supported and taken the lead in a number of important business activities, including:

- development of an equality and diversity policy and action plan to meet the public sector equality duty requirements
- staff survey covering a number of work areas which will inform actions to ensure that the workforce is skilled and motivated and learning opportunities are available
- continuing provision of operational HR support on all Service transactional activities; management support in dealing with sickness absence, disciplinary and grievance matters, and ensuring that HR policies and procedures are up to date and appropriate
- Ongoing development and support for the newly acquired HR Management System which will be rolled out across all Services in 2015/16.

❖ **Democratic Services**

A focus of the Service's work this year has been the implementation of individual electoral administration, raising awareness of the need to register, and engaging with groups such as students who are under-represented on the electoral register.

Another focus has been preparation for the general and local elections in May 2015, and also the preparation of an induction programme for members who will be newly elected in 2015, ensuring that they feel supported in their role as councillor, and especially in the community leadership role.

The Service has continued to contribute towards the good governance of the Council, providing support for the meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees and the decision making processes.

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

❖ **Legal Services**

Like Democratic Services, Legal Services have supported the good governance of the Council, by providing legal and procedural advice to Services in their operational activities, and to officers and members in the decision making process.

The Service has supported the Monitoring Officer in dealing with Standards issues, and updating the Constitution. The Service also ensures that the Council's statutory responsibilities with regard to freedom of information and data protection are met.

In supporting other Services of the Council, Legal Services have dealt with a number of prosecutions, the most high profile of which have related to health and safety matters. 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, as has the provision of a local land charges service, and the licensing and information management functions.

REGENERATION & PLANNING

❖ **Communications and Relations with other Councils**

As Leader of the City Council I have agreed with other Lancashire leaders that investigations should take place to examine the benefits and opportunities of establishing a Combined Authority with other Lancashire Districts and the County Council to cover joint approaches in the areas such as Transport, Economic Development and Regeneration.

The City Council continues to work closely with its neighbours in Cumbria as part of a consortium of local planning authorities working to deliver the nationally important

National Grid upgrade project in North Lancashire and Cumbria. It also cooperates as part of the New Nuclear Local Authorities Group within the Local Government Association to share best practice in handling major infrastructure projects for new nuclear development.

The City Council has investigated joint working with South Lakeland District Council to create a single joint Building Control Service. Those investigations have not revealed obvious savings and efficiencies however so other options are being examined.

The City Council's involvement with rolling out a new tourism brand for Morecambe Bay and holding Trusteeships on the Morecambe Bay Partnership means that it is well placed to continue to enhance important spatial relationships with South Cumbrian local authorities, with mutual benefits associated with tackling common challenges around the Bay such as skills shortages, graduate retention and housing.

Through its Communications and marketing operations the City Council has taken an active role in promoting the district across a wide range of activities, handling press and other media enquiries effectively and supporting elected members with communications expertise.

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Councillor Barry
Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Markets, Voluntary Sector
and Older People

Executive Membership

- Cabinet

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies

- Lancaster Community Fund Grants Panel

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Markets - Voluntary Sector - Older People

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures:

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership•Sustainable economic growth and jobs will be created in key sectors, including energy, knowledge, health and visitor economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Maintain working arrangements with voluntary, community, faith, arts and culture groups in support of key service delivery•The development of the Assembly Rooms as an important visitor destination and enhancer of the local economy•Supporting small businesses as important components of thriving retail centres

Progress made during 2014/15

❖ Markets and Allotments

- Agreement on future of Assembly Rooms reached. The building will continue to be used as a place from which an eclectic range of goods are sold by small traders, with a café providing a focal point for visitors.
- Strategy for the development of the Charter Market and a new layout agreed following an extensive consultation exercise. This has now been implemented and will continue to be fine tuned.
- Scoforth- Cinder Lane new allotments completed

I had numerous meetings with traders and Council officers during the consultation and implementation over the new outdoor market layout. I also organised a meeting (which I nearly forgot to go to) on March 18th to allow traders to air any current grievances about the way that the outdoor market is working. Officers and I are currently considering the issues raised. Despite not everyone being happy, my view is that the majority of stallholders are happy and that the market is looking very full and much smarter than before. Credit should go to the market officers who took quite a lot of ear-bashing from all sides during the period. Now that square routes is done, we are hoping that things will settle down and that trade will pick up during the summer months.

❖ Voluntary Sector

A report from officers notes that:

“The council continues to commission Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) partners for the delivery of advice and information services, infrastructure support and volunteering as a contribution towards the delivery of key outcomes within the Corporate Plan. Since these services were first commissioned in April 2013, there has been an increase in the number of people finding themselves in difficult circumstances requiring access to VCFS services and support across a range of issues and concerns. Principle among these has been the implications and impact of welfare reforms although other

factors continue to be needed and in many cases are also on the increase. The nature, diversity and complexity of information and advice provided by partner organisations is constantly evolving to best meet changing demands resulting from austerity measures and the adjustments that people are necessarily having to make to their lifestyles.

Despite the significant challenges at a time of changing individual needs and dynamics within the VCFS sector a recent review has shown that our partners are performing well, with some notable achievements. Current VCFS contracts are due to run until March 2016, subject to future annual budget processes and financial implications.”

I am glad that the Council has been able to continue to fund the voluntary organisations such as CAB and CVS. Whether you call these organisations ‘Social Capital’ or ‘The Big Society’, my view is that it is vital for a healthy district that voluntary organisations (big and small) continue to flourish. I attended the meeting to dish out small grants. Next year, we need to start this process much earlier in the year.

❖ Older people

Once again, I continue to be a disappointment on this part of my portfolio. I am, however, attending a 15 year celebration and nosh-up for the Friendship Centre on 25th March. I was the founding chairperson and am now nearly old enough to attend properly.

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Councillor Abbott Bryning

Portfolio Holder for Finance and Revenues and Benefits

Executive Membership

- Cabinet
- Shared Revenues and Benefits Services Joint Committee

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Services Oversight:

Resources : (Finance - ICT – Customer Services - Revenues and Benefits)

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrated good governance, openness and transparency• Health and wellbeing of our citizens is improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain an 'unqualified' value for money conclusion from our External Auditors• Work in partnership to optimise access to welfare benefits and related support

Progress made during 2014/15

❖ Finance

As in previous years, 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 the emphasis still being on making savings but still giving value for money, it was pleasing to report in July of 2014 that there had been an underspending of £277K at outturn for General Fund services in 2013/14.

Linked to the outturn, the Council's annual accounts and its arrangements for securing financial resilience and value for money were once again 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 2015/16 budget. Recognising that this was the last budget round before next May's general and local elections, it made sense for the Council to follow existing financial strategy, and so budget setting was very much 'steady as you go', rather than anything more radical. It has set the scene for 2016/17, however.

Right across the Council, services have really helped with balancing next year's budget. For 2015/16 net savings and income generation totalling over £1M have been identified. Once again, this has enabled the Council 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, as was planned a year ago, these measures have also helped protect services to a degree.

In terms of financial administration, one big task has been to change bankers. As from March, Natwest are the Authority's new bankers and good progress is being made to close the accounts with the Co-op. Local authority banking is a specialist and complex market – there is no 'move your account within 7 days' option as far as local authorities

are concerned – so it is pleasing to recognise the hard work that has been to make the transfer happen with as little trouble as possible.

The banking move was something that was brought forward – originally it was not planned to happen until March 2016 – and so this has inevitably put back progress on other important projects, like implementing new arrangements for ordering and paying for goods, but work is still underway on these initiatives for implementation during 2015/16.

In terms of treasury management, as was reported at Budget Council work on recovering Icelandic investments is now all but complete, with the bulk of the £6M originally invested having been recouped. The recent updates to the treasury strategy for next year should enable some more small gains to be made in investment returns, whilst still keeping security of investments as top priority.

To sum up, the Council's financial resilience remains strong and our financial strategy has worked well, but we still have mountains to climb in order to secure financial sustainability and balance our budget for the long term.

❖ **ICT**

The start of 2014/15 continued to be dominated by work in relation to the Public Services Network (PSN), with us receiving certification of PSN compliance on 9 May 2014. However this certificate was only valid until 16 September 2014, and, since the Cabinet Office would not extend this date, we had to undertake another security review prior to submission in August 2014. By the time that the Cabinet Office finally responded to our submission, mid-December 2014, significant changes had happened with respect to their views on compliance and we were able to work with them on a more risk managed approach. We received full certification on 9 February 2015 valid until 9 February 2016.

The Government has established a PSN Programme Board to help improve the compliance process, involving the Local Government Association (LGA), the Society of IT Management (SOCITM) and other local authority and central government representatives. The Council's ICT Manager is currently the Regional Chair for SOCITM

in the North West, which gives a good opportunity to both contribute to and keep up to date on future developments.

Having in place a secure infrastructure, the service was able to support the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration. The service also supported the Elections team in procuring and implementing a new elections system.

A large amount of this year's efforts have also been on developing PSN compliant remote working solutions. We have used the PSN and the Information Security arm of Government guidance as a starting point for managing the risks associated with looking after information. This assists us with balancing usability, security and support for remote working devices.

Reflecting on the reasons for so much work and investment having to take place in order to gain PSN certification, together with anticipated needs for a flexible ICT function, arrangements are in hand to update the structure of the service and this should be completed this month.

All in all, the service is getting in better shape to support the Council and help it through its programme of future change.

❖ **Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services**

The service has had another challenging year, adapting to and implementing continuing welfare reform changes, whilst introducing new technology to deliver long term corporate benefits to the Council. Key achievements include:

- Universal Credit - went live in Lancaster on 08 December 2014 for the simpler cases, as part of the national pilot scheme to expand the roll out of this new benefit to authorities in the North West. Universal Credit aims to make sure claimants are better off in work than if they were not. It replaces 6 existing benefits with a single monthly payment. We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions to

ensure customers receive the relevant help and support. Government plans for widening the roll out will be monitored carefully, and responded to as appropriate.

- Customer Services – have taken on new responsibilities, particularly in relation to Housing Benefits and Universal Credit. The team is now geared up to undertake “personal budgeting support” advice for customers in financial difficulty, referred from the local job centre.
- Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) – scheme benefits were maintained during 2014/15 and in the autumn, Council took the decision to retain the scheme once again for next year.
- Business Rates – the service has adapted to deal with the many changes coming through for matters such as the myriad of property relief schemes now in place, and it is helping to highlight and tackle some of the difficulties being experienced such as rate avoidance tactics. Furthermore, the service is working with Financial Services to develop further the management information and forecasting for business rate income, to assist with the Council’s corporate financial planning.
- “Channel Shift” – work is ongoing to meet the needs of our “digital” customers, who have the growing expectation of shifting their contact with us from the traditional face-to-face and telephone channels to more efficient and cost effective 24/7 online interactions. In doing so, we need to ensure that they continue to experience a high level of service and customer satisfaction.
- For example, a marketing campaign has been undertaken, encouraging customers to sign up for e-services, including e-billing and self-serve facilities. This promotion is now embedded into our standard processes and has seen a significant increase in customers using these services. E-billing has presented some immediate budget savings through savings on print and post, with the expectation that these will grow. Also self-service reduces demand on the back office and customer services, and in time it too should deliver savings.

- Also Customer Services are working with colleagues in ICT to review our existing “Customer Relations Management” platform with a view to improvement, to offer a better, more customer- focused service in the future.

With regard to the Revenues and Benefits shared service, budget savings targets have been achieved for both the current and new financial years. Despite reducing its operating costs, the service continues to perform well, processing benefits promptly and accurately – on average 22 days for new claims and 10 days for changes in circumstances, in line with shared service targets. It has also managed to maintain local taxation collection broadly in line with previous years. To summarise, the shared service with Preston continues to deliver results – providing a valuable platform on which to share information and learn from experience.

Looking forward, the focus remains to shape service delivery to manage new Government initiatives effectively and to optimise performance in what continues to be a difficult environment.

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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)

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

Health and Wellbeing Partnership

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Property Services - Climate Change - Air Quality - Off Street Car Parking

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures:

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The Council's impact on the environment will be minimised •Health and wellbeing if our citizens is improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Energy strategy in place and agreed•Annual reduction in energy used by the Council's operations•Annual reduction in carbon emissions from the Council's operations •Facilitate long term improvements in transportation to improve local air quality

Progress made during 2014/15

I wish to acknowledge the great work and support of the officers in Resources, Environmental Services and Environmental Health. In particular I want to thank Mark Davies, Nadine Muschamp, Gary Watson, David Hopwood, and Paul Cartmell for the clarity of their reports and briefing notes. My primary aim has continued 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 solar farm is the flagship project of the portfolio and, subject to proving final feasibility and achieving planning permission, in or out of the council, I look forward to seeing its installation within the next year.

❖ CLIMATE CHANGE

(A) ACTIVITY WITHIN THE COUNCIL

Carbon dioxide emissions reductions

2012-13 3.02 %

2013-14 2.37%

2014-15 - final data is not available but the evidence to date shows a continuing reduction in emissions.

The council's emissions have been restated for 2012/13 in order to account for material changes to the conversion factors provided by Defra for company reporting purposes.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the cumulative reduction in carbon dioxide emissions to March 2014 was 27.62% 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 has contributed is to be commended for their efforts.

Carillion was commissioned to undertake energy audits of selected general-fund properties such as Lancaster town hall and Salt Ayre leisure centre in order to identify

further interventions to reduce energy use.

Solar PV programme - General Fund investments

The solar PV panels at Salt Ayre have now been operational for over 18 months. In calendar year 2014 the panels there generated at around 90% of the assumption in the original business case. The panels at White Lund operated at 105% of business case.

In February Cabinet agreed in principle to the development of a 5MW solar farm on its Middleton (former Shell/ICI) site and that it be managed in as wildlife-friendly way as possible. In doing so, Cabinet authorised officers to progress the project up to planning application stage, and approved the required budget to do so. Officers will report back on the outcome of the further detailed appraisal of the project in order to inform Cabinet's final decision on the matter.

Solar PV programme - HRA investments

Following on from the progress made in the previous year, during 2014/15 PV installations were completed at an additional two "off-gas" council housing properties and further properties are being identified for possible installations in the coming years.

Energy Strategy

During 2014/15, officers submitted drafts of the energy strategy to cabinet in June 2014 and February 2015 with a new set of targets which appear to me to be somewhat arbitrary. My view is that, as now, the target for reducing CO2 emissions should be congruent with that set out in the 2008 Climate Change Act for the UK as a whole.

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.

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

Telemetry (tracking devices) have been fitted to all Council vehicles to assist with more efficient deployment, leading to fuel and emissions savings.

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

Affordable Warmth

The council continues to work in order to ensure the following minimum standards:

- Adequate insulation for the design and construction of the dwelling
- Fixed system of space heating that is controllable, understandable and accessible by the occupants, safe, properly and professionally installed; appropriate for the design, layout and construction of the dwelling and capable of heating all habitable parts, adequately and efficiently

In 2014/15 the Warm Homes Service continued with external funding from Public Health England. Additional funding was secured from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to target home owners in receipt of palliative care.

During the period 2013 to 2015 the types of interventions offered by Lancaster City Councils Warm Homes Service included the following:

- Fitting of goods in the home including LED bulbs, energy monitors, cold alarms, door trims, carbon monoxide testers, radiator reflector panels and solar-powered PIR floodlights
- Advice and assistance in accessing funding and grants for energy improvement works
- Assistance in obtaining top up funding where there is a shortfall in grant funding for energy improvement works
- Boiler and gas fire servicing
- Repairs or replacement of heating systems
- Upgrading heating controls, timers and programmers.

- Provision of temporary heaters in emergencies
- Assistance with payment of fuel debt
- Electrical repairs to enable the installation of heating systems.
- Replacement or repair of draughty windows and doors.
- General property repairs and improvements to make homes warmer and easier to heat.
- Enhanced Insulation and draught proofing throughout the home.
- Assistance with clearance of lofts to allow insulation to be installed
- Any work which prevents slips, trips, falls and other home safety type works.
- Measures around the home to assist residents living with dementia.
- Provision of Salt Sticks for gritting of paths and the fitting of handrails to prevent slips in icy weather.

Depending upon the council being able to secure the necessary external funding from Public Health/CCG in future years, it is intended that this service will continue for as long as possible.

Lancashire authorities are working together to target homes in most need in Lancashire under the Cosy Homes in Lancashire scheme (in which Storey-based LESS is the lead partner) in order to maximise take-up of energy efficiency measures and ensure economies of scale. Over 1,000 letters have been delivered to homes across the district where families may be in fuel poverty and/or living in properties which are needing interventions to improve energy efficiency.

Green Partnerships Award

During 2014/15 Lancaster City Council has contributed £2000.00 to the Green Partnership awards for environmental projects, match-funded by the county council. To date during the 2014/15 financial year this has seen 9 projects in the district receive awards ranging in size up to £500.00

❖ PROPERTY SERVICES

Organisational change

Work has continued within the property shared service on further development and

improvements to the Council's asset management database. The key areas focused upon during the year have been property-related health and safety, rationalisation of service contracts and the transparency agenda. The ultimate aim is still to provide much-improved management information and systems to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and assist Property Group in assuming the role of corporate landlord.

Building works

2014/15 has seen the 5 year capital programme for the property works identified through the 2012 condition surveys move into its second year. Having dealt with the urgent high priority works and repairs across the property portfolio during 2013/14, the second year of the programme has been more focused on specific buildings. Officers consider that targeting a fewer number of buildings is a more efficient way of working and once all the works on a particular building are complete it can then be moved into the planned maintenance regime, which will deliver significant potential savings subsequently and improve the accuracy of financial planning in the years to come.

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

Commercial land and buildings

At the beginning of the 2014/15 financial year the occupation rate across the Council's operational commercial property portfolio was 83% and by the end it had improved by 10% to an occupancy rate of around 93% (though this has been helped by St.Leonard's House, as it is no longer categorised as a commercial property for rent). This represents a reasonable position overall when considering the difficult financial climate and lack of demand for office and retail space.

Working with the Lancashire Regeneration Property Partnership, aside from the solar farm project mentioned earlier another major development proposal has been to convert St. Leonard's House to student/young worker accommodation. Cabinet authorised officers to negotiate with strategic partners on a potential transfer of ownership, and in parallel, to protect the Council's position, to undertake wider soft market testing to include adjacent property owners. A final decision is expected to be taken by Cabinet during 2015/16.

Capital receipts

Major sources of receipts, which became payable subject to detailed agreement on timing, are from council-owned land at Nightingale Hall farm and at Lancaster Leisure Park.

Bailrigg Health Innovation campus

Cabinet agreed to transfer a 24-acre site on Bailrigg Lane to Lancaster University as part of ambitious plans for a Health Innovation Campus. I and Cllr Barry abstained but on the limited basis that in transferring the land the scope of development was not circumscribed in order to prevent residential development.

The city council had acquired the land in 2009 with funding provided by the North West Development Agency, in order to facilitate the development of the land as a 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). The Health Innovation Campus appears to include extension of the campus with the relocation of the faculty of health and medicine; development of research facilities possibly in conjunction with the NHS and potential commercial partners; and science park-style development.

The transfer is seen as enabling the university to make progress on the project by approaching investors and developers as freeholder.

❖ OFF-STREET CAR PARKING

Cabinet decided to freeze parking charges in 2015-16, partly to help with visitor perception in the wake of the extensive disruption caused by United Utilities and partly to ensure that the differential between on-street and off-street charges was maintained.

In the light of the disruption car park revenues have held up in Lancaster surprisingly well though the revised gross revenue budget for 2014-15 was reduced against the original budget to recognise a likely but relatively modest shortfall (less than one per cent).

Cashless parking was to have been introduced at the end of April 2014. Following

extensive technical difficulties the scheme is being tested at the time of writing; and subject to successful testing it's ready to go live 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.

In January cabinet mandated officers to look at making monthly parking permits easier to obtain – either online or by 'phone in order to try to encourage greater use by commuters.

ON-STREET PARKING

A further year on, Lancashire Highways is still reviewing the arrangements for visitor parking in the residents' parking zones. The aim is to 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, relative to other district authorities, 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. Ongoing monitoring in these three areas continues to indicate exceedance.

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 continued to pursue the strategy including collaboration with the county council's public health function, the pursuit of grant monies to promote the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, the development of national, local and regional planning policy and guidance, work to assess the impact of taxis and buses in Lancaster centre and

setting up a model to enable predictive assessment of emissions- reducing options.

Of major importance to the planned delivery of the Air Quality Strategy is the delivery of an effective transport master plan for Lancaster. A plan has been put forward by the county council and consultation is currently ongoing regarding the content of the plan.

The delivery of the Heysham/M6 link road is seen as a key action to provide relief to the three AQMAs. There is a conditional requirement as part of the permission that requires beneficial measures to be implemented.

More detailed information on these and other actions is contained in the 2014 Local Air Quality Management Progress Report available at:

<https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/airquality-downloads-links/>

The role of Local Air Quality Management has continued to be under review nationally by Defra in 2014/15 and a consultation was undertaken in January 2015. The outcome is that local authorities continue to have a key role in delivering local action. The commencement of EU infraction proceedings against the UK for breach of nitrogen dioxide Limit Values is nationally providing an impetus for action. Lancaster has submitted a list of completed, ongoing and proposed actions to Defra as part of planned submission to the EU. 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 2014/15

Councillor Janice Hanson

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Planning

Executive Membership

- Cabinet (Deputy Leader)
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Housing Regeneration Cabinet Liaison Group

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

Management Group of the Lancaster Business Improvement District (BID)

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Economic Regeneration - Planning

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures:

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable economic growth and jobs will be created in key sectors, including energy, knowledge, health and the visitor economy• The attractiveness and offer of the district, as a place to visit or invest in, will be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New and improved employment sites and premises will become available in key business locations targeting key sectors• A Local Plan for the district adopted• Inward investment opportunities will be maximised by working with key partners, including the universities of Lancaster and Cumbria, University Hospitals Morecambe Bay and British Land• Level of support for business growth and skills development will be maximised• Supporting small businesses as important components of thriving retail centres• The development of the Assembly Rooms as an important visitor destination and enhancer of the local economy• Lancaster and Morecambe urban centres will be enhanced by investment in the built environment, heritage assets and the public realm• Cultural, retail and tourism offer will be improved

Progress made during 2014/15

❖ ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND PLANNING

A predominant issue for the planning portfolio this year has been a wide and healthy debate about the level of new housing growth needed in the district to enable the council to finalise its new Local plan up to 2031. The level of growth anticipated in the evidence provided by Turley Associates has concerned members of all parties and united opinion across the council chamber.

With lower population and household growth than anticipated being confirmed for the last decade members have given instructions for the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to be recalculated, and representations were made to the Planning Minister about the problems caused by the need to address the deficit in supply during the same period.

Notwithstanding the delay in progressing a Land Allocations Development Plan Document, the council did secure findings of soundness for its Development Management policies and its Morecambe Area Action Plan enabling them to be adopted in December.

Several wards of the district were awarded Assisted Area status during the year which will help in gaining access to a variety of financial assistance and support from government agencies.

The Heysham/M6 link road continues to be constructed at or ahead of programme which in turn is bringing confidence to potential investors and increasing the number of enquiries relating to new development projects.

Lancaster University announced its intention to develop a specialised Innovation Campus based on health care research this year. This will be a significant investment in the local economy and develop a very specialist form of Science Park at Lancaster University of regional and national importance.

Other significant economic interest is developing at Heysham Gateway and officers have been working with key landowners in the area to start the preparation of planning guidance for investors. The City Council has also supported the redevelopment of the Frontierland site in central Morecambe and established working relationships with the new owners of the Arndale Centre.

The identification of deficiencies in employment skills locally and the highlighted problems of an aging workforce have led to joint working with the Chamber of Commerce and the education sector to identify careers and skills development as a key target for economic development activity rather than traditional inward investment approaches. The City Council continues to develop its strong links with the County Council in the area of economic development.

After significant challenges and previous disappointments the City Council with the support of the County Council has secured the commitment of Placefirst to regenerate the first phase of Chatsworth Gardens. This will spend Clusters of Empty Homes money and Growing Places funding from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership to create new housing for rent in the West End of Morecambe.

The City Council has implemented major phases of the Square Routes public realm project in Lancaster City Centre and has worked closely with the Lancaster BID to develop ways to maximise the best economic use of this improvement to the appearance of the City Centre. In addition to providing economic development support to the Lancaster BID the City Council has allocated funding and support to the Chamber of Commerce to assist in the development of a Business Improvement District for Morecambe.

The gradual recovery of housing market has been demonstrated by significant progress in commencements at Lancaster Moor Hospital, Luneside West and Nightingale Hall Farm, together with ongoing completions at Heysham Mossgate.

The council has also demonstrated its ongoing commitment to playing its full role as part of the Energy Coast by acting as host authority for the national infrastructure project extending the Walney Wind farm and importing the power to Heysham. It has also

approved the construction of a new gas powered power station at Middleton Wood and the installation of four wind turbines in the Overton area.

Executive Annual Report 2014/15

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

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Service Objectives:

Housing - Environmental Health - Emergency Planning

Corporate Plan Key Actions:

Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Enhanced quality of life of local residents through access to affordable, decent homes•Health and wellbeing of our citizens is improved•The Council's impact on the environment will be minimised

Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Increased number of improved homes•Improve access to housing•Increase number of affordable homes•Maintaining adequate supply to reduce demand led unsustainable price rises in the housing market•Improve the wellbeing of our residents through collaborative, preventative and reactive measures•Increased number of vulnerable households benefitting from Warm Homes Initiative•Maintain percentage of 'broadly' compliant food businesses (category 3-5)•Maintain and/or improve average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating in council homes to a high level

Every time I read through my annual report it still amazes me just how much Environmental Health & Housing do on a day to day basis. I'm proud of how committed and pro-active they are in what can be quite challenging times with less staff and reduced budgets.

I want to say a massive thank you to all the staff and officers throughout the council who have helped make my time on Cabinet a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Together we continue to move forward.

Progress made during 2014/15

❖ ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Public Health

The Public Health Team dealt with a record number of public funerals, where no-one accepts financial responsibility for burying someone when they die. The Public Health team continued to build and strengthen relationships with other agencies in relation to vulnerable people, particularly as regards dealing with filthy and verminous premises. The council is planning innovative project working with the county's Director of Public Health team to locally address inequalities in health and tackle key health causes of ill-health.

The council's highly rated pest control service experienced an extremely busy year due to the hot summer of 2014, resulting in increased revenue. The pest control operatives have been accepted on the new Basis Prompt register, which is fundamental to the pest control service's involvement in the national Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use and recognises their suitable qualifications as quality pest control professionals.

Appointment of a Dog Fouling Enforcement Officer has helped to raise awareness in the community of the priority the council gives to fouling problems. The dog warden team worked proactively with several local schools on fouling problems and officers have carried out a number of fouling surveillance operations throughout the district. There

have been increased numbers of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for Dog Control Order offences.

The dog warden team hosted a Dogs in the Community training course in conjunction with the Dogs Trust, covering areas of new legislation. This was very popular, attended by around 30 local dog-related businesses, illustrating growing relationships this licensed businesses sector. In another sector, permanent residents of caravan sites are supportive of the newly adopted improving standards under the Mobile Homes Act 2013 which will be further developed in the coming months.

Environmental Protection

It has been another busy year for our team dealing with neighbour nuisance, pollution and anti-social behaviour. The team has successfully piloted an Early Intervention approach where officers rapidly get to the bottom of reported problems and will take improvement/enforcement action in appropriate cases. Officers are developing closer working with Lancashire Police and other partners to make an impact implementing new powers. 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. There has been an increase in the number and complexity of substantial new development projects requiring specialist environmental assessment, for example onshore installations associated with the energy generating sector.

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. The council is committed to taking action to prosecute those who fail to comply with reasonable requests and persistently put their neighbourhoods at risk in this way.

Food Safety

The council has entered into three new formal Primary Authority Partnerships with local multi-site businesses. This will offer effective regulation across all the premises in a multi-site business even if they are in another council's area, providing for regulatory consistency and closer regulatory working with and understanding the needs of businesses. Under the scope of each agreement our partnering business pays for the council's officer time carrying out agreed partnership activity. As a result these businesses and their customers can become more assured than ever that risks are well managed.

Officers have investigated over 330 cases of infectious diseases, 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. The council has participated in a study run by Cumbria and Lancashire Public Health England into the spread of an infectious disease known as Giardia. There have been numerous notified cases of the infection locally. The study will help to grow understanding and control of this debilitating infective agent.

We have responded to over 500 service requests in 2014/15 relating to food standards, safety and quality. Appropriate investigation and improvement/enforcement action has been taken in every case.

Over 400 food businesses have been inspected, unannounced, to check hygiene and food safety standards are being maintained. Consumers will be 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). 96% of our food businesses were assessed as "broadly compliant" with food safety law at the time of unannounced inspection, receiving a rating of at least 3, which is slightly higher than the previous year. We now have 91% of businesses with a rating of 4 or 5, and 80% with the top rating of 5.

Food Hygiene training is now available direct from the Food Safety team, translating what our inspectors see every day into high quality learning for food business employees.

Health and safety at work (and for customers)

Whilst recent Government policy has reduced the number of workplaces inspected by Environmental Health Officers, we carry out alternative intervention projects in response to identified concerns, assessing compliance with reasonable safety standards and acting on the findings.

There is still a legal duty to report workplace accidents and the council appears to be receiving an increased number of serious workplace accidents for investigation, these have included hospitalisation and fatal accidents in care homes. A number of serious / fatal accident investigations have been carried out during the year and prosecutions taken.

The courts have taken health & safety at work offending seriously, as demonstrated in fines and prosecution costs being awarded. For example a ten pin bowling centre received fines of £56,000 including £16,000 costs whilst £19,400 including £3,400 costs for carrying out work activity at height in an unsafe manner, putting themselves and members of the public at risk. These cases send important messages to duty-holders in the Lancaster district, and we will continue working to promote the benefits of positive compliance for protecting workers, businesses, and the people they come into contact with.

Emergency Planning and Response

The council's volunteer Duty Emergency Incident Officers and Senior Emergency Officers have been kept busy with a number of emergency incidents including the Megazone fire on Morecambe Promenade and providing bottled water to motorists trapped in a motorway closure on a very hot day. Although the winter weather was not as severe as in the previous year tidal flood warnings were received which saw council resources being put on standby and storm boards installed. Training of staff in

emergency roles has continued and a multi-agency Flooding Training event was held at The Platform and well attended as was a Beachmaster oil pollution course at Carnforth which the City Council hosted for all Lancashire coastal authorities. Our own emergency plans have continued to be reviewed and updated during the year.

❖ **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING and CEMETERIES**

- The size of the private rented sector continues to grow and it is an increasingly important source of housing. The Housing Standards Team has been concentrating on reducing the most serious hazards (category 1 hazards) in the sector, and on reducing fuel poverty by improving heating systems and insulation. Fire safety continues to be a priority and the team has a close working relationship with the Fire Service. The team is also working closely with Lancaster University to assist with the launch of their Approved Homes Scheme. This will help to assist Lancaster Universities to further improve the properties they use to accommodate their students. Housing Standards are involved in developing initiatives to make greater use of the sector in preventing homelessness.
- In 2014 the Council, in partnership with Lancashire County Council, were successful in a bid for Transformation Challenge Award Funding. The project will focus on addressing poor quality housing stock in the private rental sector, and tackling the underlying social and health needs of residents to deliver improved outcomes.

Bringing together public sector partners, it will ensure that every contact with communities maximises the opportunity to improve lives and reduce the impact on high-cost reactive services through:

- smart data collection, analysis and risk profiling tools
- work with focused populations
- developing an integrated neighbourhood service offer around early help and prevention
- utilising and building community strengths to reduce reliance on the public sector
- reducing repeat demand for services

- improving community safety and wellbeing outcomes

The project will connect with several large scale public sector programmes (Better Care Together, Prevention and Early Help for Children Young People and Families, Integrated Wellness Service, Early Response and Morecambe Regeneration) through smarter use of data systems to inform strategic planning, and developing improved pathways to support.

- Unlawful and retaliatory evictions continue to be a problem, so links continue to be improved with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to address this.
- The option of introducing Selective Licensing into the West End of Morecambe continues to be explored.
- The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) has continued to enable vulnerable residents to remain independent, safe, secure and warm in their homes. The HIA's aim is to provide a quality service, offering vulnerable residents independent advice and assistance to find solutions to their housing-related needs. The work of the HIA has a positive impact on mental health, quality of life, fear of accidents, fear of crime, prevention of hospital admissions and early admission to residential care. The HIA provides care and repair type services which includes advice and assistance to undertake repairs/maintenance as well as assistance in considering their housing options and ways to raise finance to undertake works. Handy person services are also available to carry out minor works. The HIA is also responsible for delivering the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant programme.
- In 2014/15 the HIA successfully secured continued funding from the framework of key partners including the County Council's Public Health (formerly NLTPCT), Adult & Community Services and the Supporting People programme. This funding enabled the HIA service to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable residents. In addition the HIA continues to provide a number of bolt on services for vulnerable residents including:

The delivery of 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.

The Warm Homes Service has continued throughout the 14/15 winter months. This service is delivered by Lancaster City Council with funding from Lancashire County Council's Public Health and the CCG. The aim of the service is to help vulnerable residents stay warm over the winter. The HIA provides practical solutions to help vulnerable residents keep their homes warm at an affordable level over the winter period.

- Throughout 2014/15 the HIA has continued to promote the service extensively to residents in the district and maintain the close working relationships with key partners which have been developed to enable vulnerable clients to be referred to the agency. The agency continues to deliver essential outcomes for vulnerable residents, demonstrating excellent value for money with high levels of customer satisfaction.
- During 2014/15 the HIA also secured additional funding to deliver the following services; RoSPA and Public Health funding to deliver a Home Safety Service for vulnerable children under the age of 5 and Public Health funding to deliver a service to assist people with dementia remain safe and independent in their own home.
- 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 new Universal Credit which is due to be implemented soon. 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 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 by offering outreach support

through agency drop-ins such as probation, outreach support to rough sleepers and accommodation finding advice.

- The Refuge has been operational since April 2013. It provides 7 units for families fleeing domestic violence.
- The DCLG has continued to make available funding to the districts to assist with the implementation and roll out of the new Lancashire wide Homeless 16/17 year olds protocol. The main focus of the funding is to prevent young people becoming homeless in the first instance, support families to keep young people at home and prevent placing 16/17 year olds into inappropriate bed and breakfast accommodation. The funding has facilitated accredited medication training for a number of key agencies working with families and young people.
- Temporary Accommodation (TA) targets remain below government targets – currently there are 6 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. 38 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.
- Lancaster City Council along with Blackpool, Preston, Fylde & Wyre have been successful in a bid to secure £250k to commission new services for single non-priority need homeless people. The service will provide an accommodation finding, shared housing and pre-tenancy training package.
- Choice Based Lettings are now well established within the housing options team to support the delivery of choice based lettings and the team also have responsibility for the allocation of social housing within the district. Customers have now fully

embraced the new on-line application procedure with limited disruption or complaint. This is down to officer commitment within the team and the superb support from customer services teams in Lancaster & Morecambe and the local voluntary and faith sector. A review of the Housing Allocations Policy was taken to Cabinet and approved in October 2014. 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 will help members of the public to quickly connect rough sleepers to local services. Eliminating Rough Sleeping remains a key corporate priority for the council.

Anyone who sees a rough sleeper can report it in the following ways:

- By telephoning the 24/7 StreetLink phone line 0300 500 0914
- By using the StreetLink website www.streetlink.org.uk
- By downloading the StreetLink App from the iTunes or Google Market store free of charge

For further information please visit -

http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/SWEP%20&%20CWP%20effective%20action%202012_0.pdf

- Following a successful bid to the Homes and Communities Agency in 2011 the new homeless hostel for rough sleepers/entrenched homeless is now almost complete. The new 23 bed supported housing scheme will provide 6 crisis beds, 12 move on beds and 5 self-contained semi-independent flats for the over 25's. The scheme will also deliver a wide range of on-site services including health, drug alcohol, training, education and in work support. The first residents will move in to the new scheme before the end of March 2015.

- 50 Portland Street opened in September 2013 providing a small interim project for rough sleepers/single homeless with complex needs. This will close at the end of March 2015 when the new scheme will open.
- A review of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 was completed in 2014 and is pending approval by Cabinet.
- Following the transfer of the responsibility for grounds maintenance within the council's cemeteries to Environmental Services in 2013 together with the on-going financial restraints, applications for Green Flag Awards for Morecambe Cemetery/Morecambe Parish Church and Torrisholme Cemetery were not submitted in 2014.

❖ **COUNCIL HOUSING**

General

Council housing makes an important contribution to the provision of affordable and decent homes within the district. This year has seen a continuing commitment to delivering a service which is valued by residents. The council currently provides 3761 homes to rent with just over 29% of the housing stock being sheltered or bungalow accommodation. Progress has been made over the last twelve month in reviewing the investment needs of the housing stock to ensure that it properly maintained.

We have continued to ensure that involving residents in service development, delivery and improvement, remains important to ensure that the council is approachable, more accountable, more attuned to residents' views; providing a value for money service.

Quality of Accommodation

2014/2015 has seen the continuing investment in the council's housing stock to ensure that it meets the needs and expectations of existing and future tenants. The council will

have invested £4.8 million over the last year in its homes. The capital and planned maintenance programmes have been successfully delivered by the council's in-house repairs and maintenance service, and through a number of external partnerships and contracts.

Considerable impact has been made on the Branksome estate in Morecambe with the refurbishment and improvement to the common areas of the blocks of flats, and this work will continue throughout 2015/2016. We have also been able to continue the programme of converting sheltered housing bedsits into flats at Ripley Court in Lancaster. This work has been well received by existing tenants, and should ensure the future desirability of the accommodation; meeting current and future expectations of older people. There is the continuing energy efficiency programme where we have installed solar panels to 'off-gas' rural properties which again has been well received by tenants. During the year we have also commence a programme of renewing the communal lighting systems within our larger sheltered housing schemes with LED based systems which have reduced energy consumption and will reduce future maintenance costs as well. This is in addition to the ongoing central heating and boiler renewal programme to maintain and improve the energy efficiency of council housing across the district.

The overall programme continues with kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, external refurbishment – windows, external door, rendering and repointing, re-roofing, and boundary renewal across the district; informed by the stock condition survey.

In additional there has been a focus and response to changing regulation in key safety areas including ongoing fire safety improvements, management of asbestos, and management of legionella risks.

The capital and planned maintenance programme is reviewed on an annual basis projecting forward the next five years investment needs and beyond.

The council is still developing it plans for building new council housing and in October Cabinet gave its approval to detailed appraisals to be undertaken on a number of potential sites on the Carnforth estate, the Ridge estate, and at the sheltered housing

scheme on Westgate. Work is progressing on these appraisals which will be brought back to Cabinet for final approval. Hopefully 2015/2016 will see the first council housing being built in this district for some decades.

Allocations and Lettings

It is predicted that over 400 households will have been rehoused by the council over the year. The demand for council housing remain high with over 2800 applicants on the council's housing register; a slight reduction over the year. Those in greatest need in Band A Emergency Housing Need and Band B form 7.8% of the register. The number of applicants in Band C Medium Housing Need form 38.5% of the housing register. However the greatest proportion of applicants are in Band D Low Housing Need and Band E Very Low Housing Need; together forming just over 53.7% of the register. The highest demand for accommodation remain for one and two bedroom properties forming 88% of the households on the housing register.

Neighbourhood and Community

Over the last few months council housing have been trialling new working arrangements within the tenancy and estate management team. Estate managers carry out a wide range of functions including managing the termination and starting of tenancies, dealing with tenancy enquires and changes to tenancies, dealing with breaches of the tenancy agreement, tenancy conduct, and anti-social behaviour, identifying and tackling wider estate management issues. The focus of the review has been to trial methods of improving the time available to deal with some of the more complex and difficult case of anti-social behaviour, together with creating a more proactive and community engagement role in other tenancy and estate issues. There is recognition that the estate managers have a key role in working with and involving tenants to deliver an effective service. 2015/2016 will see a further tenant satisfaction survey being undertaken, and it will be good to see if overall tenants' satisfaction is improved.

Preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour, working together with residents and other agencies, on the council's estates remains a high priority. Tenancy management takes a significant amount of time. The housing management team have again dealt with over

200 new cases during 2014/2015. The greatest number of complaints, related to noise nuisance. Other areas of main complaints related to verbal abuse, pets, and untidy gardens.

Every year the District-wide Tenants' Forum allocates funding to support community projects to improve the environment of the council housing estates and neighbourhoods. 2014/2015 saw a variety of projects supported across the district: communal patio area at Gummers Howe, Carnforth; raised accessible planters at Princes Avenue, Greaves; landscaping of redundant garage area at Prospect Grove, Morecambe; contribution to funding for play area at Langridge estate, Morecambe; wheel chair friendly communal area at Alder Grove, Marsh; parking facilities at Artlebeck Close, Caton, and The Roods, Warton.

All tenants have been recently asked for projects to be put forward for the 2015/2016 programme. Projects can include play areas, improving community spaces, up-grading neglected areas, improved communal lighting, new signs, and landscaping works. This kind of approach is central to the way the council engages with residents, supporting them to help improve their neighbourhoods.

Financing of Council Housing

2014/2015 saw rents increase by just 1%. However, Cabinet has recently set an average rent increase of just 2% for 2015/2016, and has adopted a policy that for 2016/17 onwards target rent increases be set at 3% per annum. This should ensure that the future funding needs of council housing are met both in the medium term, and the long term. 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.

Over the coming year the council will be undertaking a review to establish a rent setting policy that supports the development of an on-going council housing building programme meeting identified housing needs and taking into account the impact on the long term management and investment needs of the council's housing stock.

Tenant Involvement

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 a joint void property inspection with members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The council maintains a national accreditation for resident involvement through the TPAS Resident Involvement Quality Standard (RIQ) - an independent guarantee of excellence in resident involvement and is one of only two local authorities to have this accreditation. 2015/2016 will see the council seeking reaccreditation and recognition of its resident involvement model. Early this year a presentation on the model we have adopted was given to members of the Association of Retained Council Housing at a seminar in Sheffield.

The council remains represented on the Association of Retained Council Housing National Tenant Representation Panel by the chairperson from the District-wide Tenants' Forum.

Executive Annual Report 2014/15

Councillor Ron Sands

Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Tourism

Executive Membership

- Cabinet

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Museums Advisory Panel

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Council Services Objectives: Leisure, Culture and Tourism

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures:

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Health and wellbeing of our citizens is improved•Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership•The attractiveness and offer of the district, as a place to visit or invest in, will be improved•Lancaster and Morecambe Bay will be recognised as important visitor destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Increased number of people participating in in sports and leisure activities•Maximise opportunities for access to innovative leisure activities by working collaboratively with public and private sector parties•Maintain working arrangements with voluntary, community, faith, arts and culture groups in support of key service delivery•Cultural, retail and tourism offer will be improved•Economic impact of the arts in the district will be measured with the Council moving towards an ensuring role to support a range of delivery partners•Destination brands for Lancaster and the Lune Valley and Morecambe Bay will be developed with partners to establish these areas as important visitor destinations•Visitor numbers and spend will be increased

Introduction

The Cabinet portfolio that embraces Culture, Leisure and Tourism contains many so-called “discretionary” activities compared with other portfolios. I use the term “so-called” advisedly, because as well as being “discretionary” they are also absolutely essential if we are to live up to the impressive priorities of our Corporate Plan. So if I were to sum up the nature of my portfolio in a few words, they would be: “Discretionary, but absolutely vital to the health and well-being of all our citizens”.

Next year’s Executive Annual Report will be composed by a new City Council Cabinet as a result of the Council Elections in May 2015. I should like to wish the new council every success, coupled with the hope that, whatever their political complexion, they will embrace enthusiastically the emerging challenge to be an ensuring council, characterised by municipal entrepreneurialism.

I should also like to acknowledge the immense debt the council owes to our dedicated and hard-working staff, at all levels.

❖ LEISURE

Active Health Team

Based at Salt Ayre Sports Centre in Lancaster, the “Active Health Programme” was designed to take patients who were at risk from coronary heart disease, and support them initially through a 12 week course of exercise on prescription. However many referrals also had other contributory medical conditions such as overweight / obesity, depression and smoking as well as a number of long term health conditions such as diabetes type 1 & 2, mobility problems, hypertension, post heart surgery & asthma.

The scheme is funded externally and is now commissioned by Lancashire County Council. A new agreement for 2015/16 has been signed with a value in the region of £100k which will enable the scheme to continue serving every GP surgery in the district with over 1300 people making use of the opportunity to improve their health each year.

Salt Ayre Sports Centre

Following the recent restructure the integration of the new team is having a positive effect. Some changes to the programme include:

Public Open Day – range of free activities for families and people of all abilities to try and was attended by in excess of 400 people.

Indoor Ice Skating – new offer in the sports hall over the Christmas period which included additional activities such as a Santa's Grotto. The sessions were planned to enable attendance by various specific groups from schools including those working with young people of varying abilities. It was an ideal opportunity to provide a new and unique offer and attracted new people to the venue.

Disability Gala – Salt Ayre once again hosted the disability gala for Lancashire with representation from schools across the region. An event which was commercially sponsored by Spar.

Holiday Activity Programme – this year saw the introduction of a new approach following the integration of the sports development team in to the sports centre. A varied and unique offer was provided for young people with more than double people attending compared to last year. Emphasis on the benefits for integrating the sports development team will continue.

Roller Skating – held in the sports hall these sessions on a weekend every couple of months prove popular with over 500 young people attending popular sessions and utilising space which would otherwise be difficult to fill.

Revenue Generation – largely as a result of improved staff integration and introducing clarity of roles and responsibilities, with the addition of improved motivation and creative programming the budget revenue target for the sports centre will be exceeded with overall income comfortably surpassing the £1m figure.

Community Swimming Pools

All three swimming pools will return revenue figures in excess of budget requirements. Swimming lessons at Heysham continue to increase and are currently in excess of 220 with overall performance across Hornby and Carnforth similarly improving on last year.

University of Cumbria

The partnership with the University continues to flourish, whereby the Council receives a circa £50k in return for providing use of all swimming pools, gym and exercise classes for students and staff. The beneficial arrangements are currently being negotiated for a further twelve months and have been entered to APSE for best public partnership agreement in the country.

Development partner

Cabinet approved in principle to seek a development partner to improve the facilities at Salt Ayre. This exciting opportunity is underway and should enable an improved offer for our communities, increased opportunities for those currently not participating in physical activity and importantly reduce the subsidy.

❖ CULTURE AND TOURISM

Following the restructuring of council services in 2013/14 the incorporation of the arts and visitor economy as mainstream economic development activities has strengthened their profile. Arts Council England has acknowledged that the two sit firmly together as economic drivers in the district and the region and fully welcomes that approach. It will strongly influence their approach in allocating funds in forthcoming years.

The Storey Institute continues to improve its financial position under the council's management with a raft of new tenants taking space in the building, including the University of Lancaster. The new management team has settled in and the Platform has run a wide range of performances and hosted events during the year.

The two major events which the council said it would support in 2014/15 were a major success. The full Vintage by the Sea festival took place over a whole weekend and coincided with a flypast over Morecambe by the world's only Avro Lancasters still flying today. In the autumn the Light up Lancaster festival and the annual fireworks event the following day demonstrated how new ground was being broken by this form of performing arts. The success of both event has led to organisers wanting to re run them in 2015/16.

This year saw the launch of both the Lancaster and Morecambe Bay visitor brands. Both enjoyed considerable consensus from stakeholders and were highly informed by seeking views from people outside the district who could bring a degree of unconnected objectivity which we so often forget to ask for. A great asset of the brands is their symbiotic nature. They can be used individually or together depending on the business or organisation using them.

The council helped by Visit Lancashire has facilitated training for a wide range of private sector organisations in the use of the two brand tool kits associated with them. BBC Autumnwatch visited RSPB Leighton Moss for a second time, presenting a second opportunity for national coverage to promote the Morecambe Bay brand in particular.

The council continues to work with the County Council to refine the Museums offer in the district and link it more effectively with the districts visitor economy.

Executive Annual Report 2014/15

Councillor David Smith

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

Executive Membership

- Cabinet

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- Lancashire Waste Partnership
- Community Safety Partnership

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Environmental Services Community Safety Clean and Green

Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures:

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact of crime and anti-social behaviour across the district will be minimised • The Council's impact on the environment will be minimised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with the Police and Community Safety Partners to minimise the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour• Reduce hate crime and the fear of crime felt by minority communities • Amount of household waste reused, recycled or composted is maintained• Increase income from energy and recycling projects• Perception of people who live in, work in, or visit the district that streets and public spaces are safe and clean is increased• increased number of projects that directly involve local communities in improving local areas, parks and open spaces

Progress made during 2014/15

❖ ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES – COMMUNITY SAFETY – CLEAN AND GREEN

- In 2013/14 42.5% of all household waste in the District was reused, recycled or composted. This was a 1.7% increase on the previous year. In 2009/10 this figure was 35.86%. Lancashire wide reuse, recycling, composting statistics for 13/14 are below. In terms of the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle what is especially significant is the Lancaster performs well in terms of amount of residual waste collected per head and the amount recycled.

	Residual per capita (kg)	Recycling rate %
South Ribble	193.3	50.5
Fylde	206.6	49.5
Wyre	202.2	49.2
Chorley	199.9	48.7
West Lancs	227.6	43.3
Lancaster	200.7	42.5
Preston	211.7	38.5
Ribble Valley	235.4	37.6
Pendle	231.7	36.7
Hyndburn	193.1	34.5
Burnley	224.6	32.7
Rosendale	238.6	32.1
WDA		
Blackburn with Darwen	225.6	40.1
Blackpool	261	41.1
Lancashire	231.1	47.4

- The key findings of the 2013 Living in Lancashire Survey (a pan Lancashire survey) were-
 - When asked how satisfied or dissatisfied respondents are with aspects of their local area, they are most likely to be satisfied with access to green areas (79%), with the cleanliness of the streets and pavements in their local area (62%), and the appearance of the buildings (61%).

- Just under nine out of every ten respondents (87%) consider their local area to be safe, with only one in ten (11%) considering it to be unsafe.
- Of those respondents who consider their local area to be safe, the most common reasons given for this response are: having a good community or neighbours (26%), a low level of crime (15%) and living in a quiet area without trouble or crime (15%).
- Of those respondents who consider their local area to be unsafe, the most common reasons given for this response are: anti-social behaviour (52%), experience of crime (12%) and bad street conditions (9%).
- Four-fifths of respondents (81%) say that anti-social behaviour isn't a problem in their local area.
- Respondents are most likely to think that dangerous driving (42%) and rubbish or litter are problems in their local area (31%).
- More than half of respondents feel that the level of crime in their own area is better compared to both the UK and other areas of Lancashire (52% and 50% respectively).
- Just over a third of respondents (36%) believe that people using or dealing drugs is a problem in their area.
- In regard to the root causes of crime, respondents were most likely to say that drugs (81%) and alcohol (74%) are a problem.
- Just under two-thirds of respondents (63%) agree that crime is dealt with successfully by the police and other local public services, and over half of respondents (56%) agree that anti-social behaviour also is dealt with successfully.

- Almost nine out of every ten respondents (89%) say that they would report crime and anti-social behaviour to the police.

- Four-fifths of respondents (79%) disagree that offenders get tough enough sentences.

- In 2014/15 Reports were considered by Cabinet on the future of the Storey Gardens and the Happy Mount Park Masterplan. The decisions in both cases were significantly influenced by the views of local communities and 'Friends of groups.
- A number of improvement projects were delivered in local parks and open space which were directly supported by Friends of Groups- e.g. Regent Park, Williamson Park, Ryelands Park, Happy Mount Park, Langridge Play Area.
- The Council continued its financial support of PCSOs, CCTV and a Lancashire wide project to reduce Domestic Violence
- The Community Safety Partnership continued to focus on safety priorities for the District.
- The Council signed up to the Lancashire Community Safety Agreement.
- The Council launched the Community Trigger process is reviewed at the Community Safety Partnership Executive Meeting on a Quarterly basis.
- The Community Safety Partnership continued to oversee the funding process for projects that tackle priorities in the district.
- The restructure of how the City Council's public realm functions are delivered was implemented. This generated cash savings for the Council but also enables the Council to deliver its' frontline services like cleansing, grounds maintenance, highways maintenance in a more efficient way.
- Based on the fact that the financial future for Local Government is bleak work is taking place to review how services are delivered with a view to bringing forward options for savings that can contribute to the 2016/17 budget and onwards. Work is also taking place to establish exactly what the impact of County's savings proposals will be especially with regard to the £1.2 million/ year contribution to waste collection costs that County will no longer provide from 2017/18. This will be fed into the ongoing budget process and MTFS.

Finally.

A busy year for everyone concerned. It is very difficult meeting the expectations of the residents of the district at a time of reduced finance and more responsibilities and demands.

I would like to thank fellow councillors for their understanding when we can't always ex-ceede to their requests for assistance in their wards.

Direct services underwent a restructure last year. It is a tribute to everyone concerned how smooth the transition was.

Finally a thank you to Mark Davies and all officers and staff at L.C.C. For their help and advice over the past municipal year.