

Executive Annual Report 2015/16

Councillor Blamire

Leader and Cabinet Member for Relationships with other Councils, Communications, Performance Management, Democratic Services, Legal and HR

Executive Membership

- **Cabinet** (Chairman)
- **Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee**

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- **Community Safety Partnership** (Substitute)
- **Lancashire Leaders Meeting**

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Relationships with other Councils, Communications, Performance Management, Democratic Services, Legal and HR

Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes	Success Measures
Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve neighbourhood working by engaging with communities to understand their needs and empowering them to deliver services locally <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Ward Councillors feel supported in their Community Leadership role - 78.3% of councillors have attended a training activity to improve their community leadership skills.
Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrate	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve our understanding of the needs of our communities to inform our service delivery, improving standards of diversity and equality

good governance, openness and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Deliver quality services through a skilled and motivated workforce □ Gain an 'unqualified' value for money conclusion from our External Auditors.
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This has been an unusual year with many changes and demands on all areas. In Democratic Services, the team have prepared for and delivered Parliamentary, City Council and Parish Elections at the same time. 26 new Councillors have been inducted and the District Emergency Control Centre was activated in December because of flooding which involved many Democratic Services staff.

Legal Services have supported other services of the Council and have undertaken a number of prosecutions. The most high profile was the prosecution under Health and Safety of a wine bar that served a cocktail with freezing liquid nitrogen to a teenager.

HR have continued to provide operational support to all transactional activities and management support. They have done an exceptional job leading to the recruitment of the new Chief Executive on top of their normal work.

Communications new much improved website went live in March and speaking personally, the new laptop and personal connection to broadband has been a massive improvement for me and I can now use a far wider range of information sites. The Communications and Marketing team do a fantastic job to promote our services and our area.

I am very grateful to all these hardworking staff and also to all our officers and staff who give us such good help and advice. Thank you all.

Progress made during 2015/16

Democratic Services

The focus of work for the Democratic Services team for much of 2015/16 was preparation and delivery of a complex combination of elections. This was the first time for almost 30

years that the Council's Returning Officer had been responsible for Parliamentary, City Council and Parish Council elections at the same time. The combination required many hours of planning and very close working with colleagues in Wyre Borough Council for the shared Parliamentary constituency of Lancaster and Fleetwood.

Post-elections the team's focus turned to making arrangements for the 26 new Councillors to accept office and enrol on appropriate induction training. Although training and development opportunities are available for Councillors throughout their term of office, the majority of their training activity does take place in their first few months as a new Councillor, and Democratic Support staff are on hand to offer support with that.

Democratic Services also provide support to the Mayor who has been engaged on civic duties throughout the year and has been very visible about the district as our 'Mayor on a Bike'.

The District Emergency Control Centre was activated in December because of flooding in the district. Many of the staff in Democratic Services were employed in staffing the centre and, of course, the DECC room also doubles as the Democratic Support Office, so those staff who weren't involved in managing the crisis were housed elsewhere to continue providing support to committees and to the Mayor.

The remainder of the municipal year will again be taken up with planning for electoral activity. Police and Crime Commissioner elections are scheduled for May and the European Union Referendum in June 2016.

Legal Services

Legal Services have continued to support 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.

Legal Services formed part of the cross service panel of officers involved in the comprehensive procurement exercise for a development partner for Salt Ayre.

In supporting other services of the Council, Legal Services have undertaken a number of prosecutions, the most high profile of which related to the prosecution under health and safety legislation of a wine bar that served a cocktail with freezing liquid nitrogen to a teenager. Other prosecutions have been undertaken in respect of planning and food hygiene 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.

Human Resources and Organisational Development

HR have continued to provide operational support on all service transactional activities, and management support in dealing with sickness absence, disciplinary and grievance matters, and have ensured that HR policies and procedures are up to date and appropriate for the needs of the Council.

In particular HR are leading the recruitment process for the new Chief Executive.

Work has continued on developing the newly acquired HR Management System.

In Organisational Development, a revised *Performance Management Framework* has been developed, setting out the requirements for effective performance management within a framework that helps to integrate planning, service review, financial management and business improvement. The CorVu system has been developed to assist effective performance by reducing multiple entry of the same data, enhancing ownership of indicators and actions, and facilitating faster and tailored reporting. Through performance dashboards, CorVu will enable different information to be available at different levels of the Council, providing a strategic overview of performance for Cabinet Members and senior management and more detailed operational information at a Service, team and individual level.

There has also been a review of council business travel, focused on gaining a clear and broad understanding of the work and related needs and demands, from both an operational and customer perspective, that generate necessary travel in order to fulfil officer responsibilities and deliver services. The Service has overseen the introduction of pool cars for use by officers, and also the use of vehicle trackers in these vehicles and in other council vehicles to provide useful data that is helping to understand and inform business travel and flag up potential efficiencies.

Communications

The council's new look website went live in March. The improved site is based on a 'responsive design' that automatically detects the type of device you are using and responds accordingly.

Whether you're using a smartphone, a tablet, a PC, a Smart TV or indeed any device capable of viewing a web page, our new site will serve up a simple-to-use and easy-to-read experience. This is one part of our new 'digital by default' drive to make it as easy and convenient as possible for people to access Lancaster City Council information and services online.

The council also has a range of e-newsletters for distribution to an increasing number of residents who prefer to receive their information in this way.

The communications and marketing team has also expanded the council's use of social media channels to meet the needs of citizens and enable two way communication in a cost effective way.

While online communications are becoming increasingly important, maintaining good relationships with the 'traditional' media remains essential. The communications section continues to provide a one stop shop to answer enquiries from the media locally, nationally and internationally.

We have also dealt with a number of film enquiries and supported filming to attract visitors to the district, including national TV programmes Flog It and Countryfile.