

## **Executive Annual Report 2017/18**

### **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
- Museums Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee
- Corporate Property Review Cabinet Liaison Group

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

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**

Outcomes	Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership.</li><li>•Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrate good governance, openness and transparency.</li><li>•Maintain a financially stable position and strong financial forecast for the delivery of Council services.</li><li>•Sustainable economic growth and jobs will be created in key sectors including energy, knowledge, health and the visitor economy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Improve performance and effectiveness of partnerships in delivering corporate priorities.</li><li>•Improve neighbourhood working by engaging with communities to understand their needs and build resilience.</li><li>•Maintain an ‘unqualified’ value for money conclusion from our External Auditors.</li><li>•Review the Localised Council Tax Benefits Support Scheme (LCTS) to determine a sustainable scheme for the future.</li><li>•Act on the government’s future roll-out of universal credit in the district and other welfare reforms.</li><li>•Review and rationalise the Council’s future accommodation needs to support service delivery and save money.</li><li>•Implement agreed budget proposals and take positive action where they do not deliver desired outcomes.</li><li>•Develop and implement a range of further savings and income generation opportunities to sustain the Council’s budget.</li><li>•Determine Lancaster district’s contribution to the emerging concept of the Northern Powerhouse.</li><li>•Improve local conditions for business growth and skills development.</li></ul>

## **Progress made during 2017/18**

### **Communications**

- Through its communications and marketing operations, the City Council has taken an active role in promoting the district, handling press and other media enquiries effectively and supporting elected members with communications expertise. Examples of high profile issues that have benefitted from communications support include the November floods, the Local Plan, the snap General Election, Bailrigg Garden Village and recent developments on the Canal Quarter.
- In supporting other services of the Council, the communications and marketing team has provided expertise to support their operational activities and the

development of new projects including the opening of Tranquil Spa at Salt Ayre, the Council's new anti-social behaviour team, festivals and events.

- The Council's website continues to be developed with the addition of extra functionality through the addition of more online payment facilities as the Council looks to continue the move towards having more of its communications online. Steps are also being taken to improve how the Council presents information on its commercial services online as part of its overall strategy of increasing footfall and income by the creation of a bespoke webpage branding module.
- In the last year the website saw a total of 500,995 unique visitors with 3.05 million total views, an increase from the previous year of 15% and 11% respectively.
- Developing our social media channels with additional and more varied content, including videos of staff carrying out their duties, is becoming an increasing priority as more and more people turn towards this medium for their news and to express their views by comments and sharing.
- The Council's corporate Facebook page, for example, has seen an increase in the number of followers of more than 25% in the last year, due to the increased focus that is being directed towards this increasingly important channel. Similarly, the Council's corporate Twitter feed has an increased number of followers and now has more than 10,000 followers with a growing level of engagement.
- Work is currently ongoing to improve the Council's communication with staff, with a new newsletter being launched and a new intranet is in the process of being developed.

## **Performance Management**

Cabinet and Budget & Performance Panel received quarterly updates on corporate success measures, to enable discussion and request further information where appropriate.

Further refinement of success measures and performance indicators will take place in line with the developing Council Plan.

One of the key aims for 2018-19 is to develop from quarterly reporting of performance towards making performance information more open and accessible to officers, members and the public.

## **Democratic Services**

Democratic Services had a busy year with Elections, delivering successful elections for Lancashire County Council in May 2017 and an unexpected snap UK Parliamentary election in June 2017. By-Elections were also held for the County Council division of Morecambe North, the Halton with Aughton and Skerton West City Council Wards, and for the Morecambe Town Council Wards of Bare North, Lune Drive, Heysham North and Out Moss Lane.

In July the Elections team commenced the annual household canvass, which saw the despatch of 63,885 household enquiry forms to residential properties throughout the district. The final response rate was 78%. The majority of those failing to respond to the canvass were either found to be empty properties or were off-campus properties that had not become occupied for the new academic year. The register of electors was published on 01 February 2018.

Work also commenced on a district wide Community Governance Review which will conclude during 2018. Several issues have been raised regarding parish councils and these will be addressed during the review, including a request for a new parish council for Heysham.

There were many interesting civic events throughout the year. In July, the Council welcomed the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment who exercised their right as Honorary Freeman to march through Lancaster the City of Lancaster with bayonets fixed, drums beating and Colours flying. It was a wonderful sight to see with many local school children

lining the streets to wave their flags at the soldiers. The Mayor inspected the troops in Dalton Square before welcoming the soldiers into the Ashton Hall for lunch.

This year saw the introduction of a Citizenship Panel chaired by the Mayor with one of its main responsibilities to work with CVS on Citizenship awards for the district. The awards will take place in June of this year and will see the introduction of a new annual award – “The Roger Sherlock Award for Community Inspiration”. This award has been welcomed by Councillor Sherlock’s family and celebrates the work of unsung heroes in our communities.

In December, officers in Democratic Services worked together with Age UK to host a Loneliness Summit in Lancaster Town Hall. This event was the first of its kind and was hailed as a great success bringing together many local organisations. The aim of the Summit was to raise awareness of loneliness and show what was available for people who were lonely. School children of different ages attended as well as many Councillors. The children attending were asked to take back what they had learnt in their workshops and share with the rest of the school.

In October the Deputy Mayor led a Service of Dedication and unveiled a commemorative paving stone in honour of Private Albert Halton VC in Warton where he was born. Private Halton of the 1st Battalion, The King’s Own Royal Lancaster Regiment was awarded the Victoria Cross in October of 1917 for gallantry during an attack near Poelcappelle on 12th October 1917. It was a moving event with children from the local school taking part by reading poems about World War One.

## **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 continue to be involved with a variety of projects undertaken by officers in all services in the Council They have played key roles in procurement, contract drafting

and negotiation as well as providing advice on strategy and risk as well as statutory compliance.

In supporting other services of the Council, Legal Services have again undertaken a number of successful prosecutions including health & safety and planning matters.

Anti-social behavior remains a hot topic, with Legal Services advising on policy, enforcement and undertaking advocacy on behalf of the Council at statutory appeals.

Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO's) have been brought into Lancaster City Centre and proposed for Morecambe Town Centre. Legal Services have drafted and advised on the contents of the PSPO's.

Legal Services have also been involved with the recent refugee re-settlement programme.

The day to day legal work incorporating debt collection, rating cases, 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.

## **Information Governance**

The implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations in May of this year is being supported by the expanded Information Governance Team. This team will be supporting the council in complying with the new regulatory regime, together with reviewing and updating our information and data policy.

## **Human Resources**

In the last 12 months the HR Team have continued to work closely with services across a range of activities, including TUPE transfers, service restructures, employee relations and change management activities. HR provides vital support to services to enable them to deliver their own ambitious plans and essential frontline services to residents.

## **Apprenticeships**

The HR Team have continued to work with managers to create opportunities to appoint apprentices into suitable roles across the Council, with 6 new apprenticeships in the past 12 months. In addition, HR staff have also been working to maximise the apprenticeship levy funds, enabling a number of existing staff to start apprenticeship qualifications, including 8 staff within the Public Realm and Waste and Recycling teams.

### **Workforce and Succession Planning and Performance Appraisals**

In early summer 2017 HR implemented two crucial areas of work to ensure that the Council adopted a planned approach to managing and developing staffing resource, via the introduction of succession and workforce planning discussions and the re-launch of Performance Appraisals.

Annual succession and workforce planning discussions with senior managers were introduced to ensure that staff are appropriately developed or deployed to meet future challenges, with outcomes feeding into the individual Performance Appraisal discussions. As part of the revised and re-launched Performance Appraisal process all line managers received training in improved objective setting and assessment of individual staff performance. These two approaches provide a clear opportunity to ensure that staff resource is carefully planned, managed and developed, and aligned to the ambitions of each service unit.

### **Attendance**

Working closely with managers and staff, the HR team have enabled the reduction of absence rates from an average of 12.06 days per employee as at 31 March 2010 to an average of 6.46 days per employee as at 31 March 2017. These figures compare extremely favourably against CIPD figures for public sector absence, of 8.5 days per employee for 2016, as well as with other authorities in Lancashire. The delivering of sustained improvements in attendance has a direct impact on Council performance and has resulted in a significant productivity savings, thereby supporting the delivery of services to the public in the context of ongoing financial restraint. Whilst figures are not yet available for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, the Council is on target to achieve a further improvement in attendance for the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

## **'Our Values'**

Working closely with colleagues from across the Council, HR has taken a central role in the work around the new Lancaster City Council Values and Behaviours, which are now known simply as 'Our Values'. At the start of 2018 managers attended workshops to introduce 'Our Values', which will be followed with further workshops for all Council staff. Much more work will be taking place over the coming year to embed 'Our Values' into all aspects of the organisation and its processes.

## **Investors in People**

HR worked with Services to support the successful re-accreditation for Investors in People status (IIP) under the new and more challenging IIP Framework. The Council was also awarded the IIP Health and Wellbeing Award in recognition of the extensive work led by HR over a number of years to support and improve staff wellbeing. Additionally, as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to encouraging healthy lifestyles and in conjunction with colleagues from across the authority, HR championed the Council's involvement in the National Cycle Challenge, which saw the Council achieve an impressive 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

## **Celebrating Success**

October 2017 saw the inaugural Council wide Celebrating Success employee awards event, which recognised the contribution and achievements of the Council's workforce with awards for both individuals and teams.

Nine awards were issued, including; Outstanding Contribution to the Community, Outstanding Customer Service and Mentor/Coach of the Year, which were won by staff from across the organisation. The overall Lancaster City Council Award was won by Salt Ayre Leisure Centre.

Achievement awards were presented to individuals who had successfully completed their apprenticeships, as well as Long Service Awards to those staff who had achieved 25 years continuous service with Lancaster City Council.

## **Relationships with Other Councils**



Leaders from the Lancashire Local Authorities are continuing to meet to discuss what a more joined-up, cooperative Lancashire might look like, whether in the form of a Combined Authority or an alternative arrangement.

The informal partnership with Barrow Borough Council and South Lakeland District Council around Economic Development for Morecambe Bay has also made much progress over the last year, with the opportunity to discuss the partnership with Jake Berry MP, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, in February.

Congratulations and thanks to all the officers and their departments who have worked so hard during the year.