



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

# **Executive Annual Report 2015/16**

**April 2016**

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

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.

***Cllr Eileen Blamire***

***Leader***

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## *Decision Making Arrangements*

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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.

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## *Executive Decisions*

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The table below shows the executive decisions that were taken from **June 2015 to April 2016**. 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.

	<b>Executive decisions</b>			
<b>Decisions moved in the name of Councillor</b>	<b>Key Decision taken at Cabinet</b>	<b>Non-key decision taken at Cabinet</b>	<b>Individual Cabinet Member Decision</b>	<b>Urgent Business Decision</b>
<b>Eileen Blamire (Leader)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Janice Hanson (Deputy Leader)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Abbott Bryning</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Margaret Pattison</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Richard Newman-Thompson</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Karen Leytham</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Darren Clifford</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>David Smith</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>

## 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**

<b>Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes</b>	<b>Success Measures</b>
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve our understanding of the needs of our

services that are valued by the public and demonstrate good governance, openness and transparency	communities to inform our service delivery, improving standards of diversity and equality <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver quality services through a skilled and motivated workforce <input type="checkbox"/> Gain an 'unqualified' value for money conclusion from our External Auditors.
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## **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.

## Executive Annual Report 2015/16

### Councillor Abbott Bryning

#### Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Property Services, Rural Areas and Car Parking

### Executive Membership

- **Cabinet**

### Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Property Services, Rural Areas and Car Parking

Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes	Success Measures
The council's impact on the environment will be minimised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Annual reduction in energy consumption used by the council's operations</li><li>□ Annual reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from the council's operations</li><li>□ Increased proportion of the council's energy needs generated from renewable sources</li></ul>
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"><li>□ Rationalise our property holdings, to deliver better value for money</li><li>□ Improve efficiency and effectiveness, reduce waste and develop customer service through re-shaping our services, using technology and collaborative working as appropriate</li></ul>
The attractiveness and offer of the district, as a place to visit or invest in, will be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Lancaster and Morecambe urban centres will be enhanced by investment in the built environment, heritage assets and the public realm</li></ul>

## **Progress made during 2015/16**

### **Property**

#### **Corporate Landlord**

This year has seen significant progress made towards the role of corporate landlord. Work has continued within the property shared service to further develop and improve the Council's asset management database. The key area focused upon during the year has been property compliance with these new corporate arrangements being officially rolled out on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 ensuring that all Council property meets statutory requirements and thus reducing the Authorities exposure to risk. The centralisation of these critical tasks will also lead to improved value for money. The ultimate aim of the introduction of the corporate landlord role remains to provide much improved and coherent property management, information and systems.

#### **Building Works**

This year has also seen the continuation of the 5 year building work and repairs programme across its property and heritage assets as the work identified in the 2012 condition surveys moved into its third year. Having dealt with the urgent high priority works and repairs during the first year, subsequent years have seen more focused activity on specific buildings. Targeting and completing work on a fewer number of buildings is a more economic and efficient way of working and once all the work on a particular building is complete, that building 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.

#### **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 93% and by the end this figure had improved slightly 94%. This represents a relatively stable position and a good level of occupancy overall when considering the difficult financial climate and the general lack of demand for office and retail space.

Work has also continued with the Lancashire Regeneration Property Partnership (LRPP) to find a financially viable alternative use for St. Leonard's House. The results of this work were presented to members at Cabinet during March 2016 along with the outcome of a soft market testing exercise.

### **Energy Investment Grade Audits**

During 2015/16, through the LRPP Property Group commissioned Carillion Breathe to undertake energy investment grade audits across a number of its key buildings that offer a significant service life expectancy. Anticipated benefits of implanting the recommendations from these audits include:

1. Annual energy cost savings in the range of 38.7% - 51.1%
2. Annual carbon savings in the range of 22.6% - 33.2%
3. Improved estate efficiency and site resilience
4. Maintenance improvement
5. An improved staff and public environment
6. Supporting the local economy and using existing and/or local suppliers
7. Training and development for the existing in-house facilities team
8. Continuous innovation helping to deliver further savings

As the package of energy measures was approved by Council during the recent budget setting process, work around the practical implementation of the recommendations is expected to commence during 2016/17.

### **Looking Forward**

Continuing with the building works programme, developing and improving the facilities management offer, and rationalising the Council's property holdings (including the Town Halls and other Municipal Buildings) will all feature strongly in the coming 12 months.

## **Rural Affairs**

- Extensive consultation on "How we should plan for our districts future" undertaken in Autumn 2015. This included engagement with all of the districts rural communities.
- Arnside/Silverdale DPD public consultation on issues and Options completed.
- Public consultation of proposals for National Grid upgrade and Morecambe Bay cable tunnel during 2015. Significant protection achieved for sensitive rural landscapes by national Grid being persuaded to adopt the tunnelling option to connect power lines between Barrow and Heysham.
- Arrangements in place with Yorkshire Dales National Park National Park for hand over of statutory planning functions from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016.
- Arrangements in place for City Council to hold a new seat on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Board from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016
- Continued support for the Arnside/Silverdale and Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Funding maintained and the City Council remains the managing authority for Arnside/Silverdale.

## **Car Parking**

- Several car parks resurfaced
- Successful introduction of Ringgo (pay for car parks by mobile)
- Took positive action to help businesses recover from flooding by providing free car parking on Saturdays in run up to Christmas (in addition to the annual free parking initiatives already in place)

## Executive Annual Report 2015/16

**Councillor Darren Clifford**

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for  
Leisure, Culture and Tourism and Climate Change**

### **Executive Membership**

- **Cabinet**
- **Museums Partnership Advisory Panel**

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

- **Health and Wellbeing Partnership** (Substitute)
- **LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group**
- **Museums Advisory Panel**

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Leisure, Culture & Tourism, Climate Change

<b>Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes</b>	<b>Success Measures</b>
The council's impact on the environment will be minimised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased proportion of the council's energy needs generated from renewable sources</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased proportion of council business travel mileage provided by electric or ultra-low emission vehicles</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase income from energy and recycling projects</li></ul>
Health and wellbeing of our citizens is improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased number of people participating in sports and leisure activities</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Maximise opportunities for access to innovative</li></ul>

	<p>leisure activities by working collaboratively with public and private sector partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Facilitate long term improvements in transportation to improve local air quality</li> </ul>
<p>Sustainable economic growth and jobs will be created in key sectors, including energy, knowledge, health and the visitor economy</p> <p>The attractiveness and offer of the district, as a place to visit or to invest in, will be improved</p> <p>Lancaster and Morecambe Bay will be recognised as important visitor destinations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ 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</li> <li>□ Levels of support for business growth and skills development will be maximised</li> <li>□ Destination brands for Lancaster and the Lune Valley and Morecambe Bay will be developed with partners to establish these areas as important visitor destinations</li> <li>□ Visitor numbers and spend will be increased</li> </ul>

## **Progress made during 2015/16**

### **Overview – Culture and Tourism**

2015/16 has brought some real achievements in spite of budget pressures. Visitor numbers and spend as well as tourism jobs in the district continue to rise, showing the importance of this sector to our local economy.

In the last year the Council has been able to maintain its investment in the arts, museums, major festivals and performances and events at the Platform and Storey, all of which add to the unique quality of life and the visitor economy of the district, improving the district's competitiveness as a place to visit, live and work. Service reviews taking



place currently in all of these areas will identify different ways in which the Council can achieve more for its money. This will include the development of more commercial, income generating services and will also reflect opportunities for the Council to work with others across a range of areas.

The two destination brands for Lancaster (including the Lune Valley) and Morecambe Bay have been well taken up by tourism businesses across the district. Work is now beginning, with the private sector and other partners, to prioritise how these two destinations can develop in the future and how to achieve the investments required.

## **Culture**

### **Platform and performances**

It has been an interesting year at the Platform with some very popular events that have attracted over 7,000 attendees to see live performances including, music, talks and some children's shows. Around 25% of the Platform's audience are visitors from outside of the district. The Platform has also been at the centre of a number of large scale Morecambe events including the Vintage by the Sea Festival, North Lancashire Soul Festival, Steampunk Festival and Catch the Wind Festival attracting 1,000's of festival goers many of whom are visitors to the area. The Platform is a popular venue hired by local community groups and organisations, this year the Platform has taken over 50 bookings offering a range of activities including, dancing, live music, flower club and craft fairs attracting more than 5,000 additional attendees. Income from ticket sales has increased this year as has sales from the bar, catering and venue hire.

The Platform brings performances and events to Morecambe, providing entertainment for local communities and visitors creating economic impact. A review is now underway to consider how audiences and income can be increased by development of the venue and the surrounding area, including the Bay Arena and additional income generation. The Platform team has been tasked with exploring opportunities to programme other civic buildings and in particular 'Ashton Hall' as this venue has the potential to attract higher profile artists/performers as it seats 800. An evening with Sir Chris Bonnington has already been scheduled for October 2016.

## **Museums**

The Council's museums are an important in terms of the culture and heritage quality of life of Lancaster and the wider district. However, the museums cost over £0.5m a year for to operate and insufficient funds are available to refresh them and bring them up to date. All three museums are currently managed by Lancashire County Council as part of a cross Lancashire service that is about to reduce considerably in scale.

A high level review of the museums service is now underway to provide options to update and improve the museums offer, at the same time as reducing the overall costs and increasing income. This will be a major piece of work during 2016/17 but may well be the means by which the district can continue a strong museums service in the future.

## **Arts investments**

Arts and Culture is an important part of the district's economy but has suffered due to wider reductions in funding over the last year. The Council has been able to maintain its annual investment of £194k in the Dukes, More Music, Ludus Dance and Litfest, which helps to secure a further £973k of further investment and £1.26m of earned income. Total audiences were over 145,000, of which 43% were visitors from outside Lancaster District. In addition, over 30,000 people participated in an arts activity, workshop or educational session and these organisations employ 80 people, are supported by 200 volunteers and work with over 200 artists. A review of Arts investments during 2016 will help to highlight the impact of the Arts on the local economy and consider how best to achieve an impact from the Council's investment.

## **Storey programming**

The Storey is fast becoming well known as a busy Creative Arts Centre and over the last year a number of significant events and exhibitions have taken place that really start to put the Storey, Lancaster and the district on the map.

Over the last few months a Freelance Artists' Hub and Artists' Studios have developed that are already proving popular.

Arts audiences at the Storey are expected to reach 8,000 by the end of the year with an additional 300 attendees participating in arts activity. Many more attended weekly arts activities provided by a range of tenants include a dance school, yoga studio and print workshop. Income from room hire for 2015/16 is expected to reach £42k, an increase of

28% from last year and a significant proportion of this is made up from income from arts activities.

## **Tourism**

### **Destinations – Lancaster and Morecambe Bay**

Lancaster district's upward trend continues with visitor numbers reaching over 7 million, visitor spend reaching almost £416m and 5,878 full time equivalent jobs tourism jobs in 2014. (2015 figures are due during August this year).

The Destination Brand toolkits for Morecambe Bay and Lancaster are available for businesses and stakeholder on the Marketing Lancashire website and the image library has been expanded. Support has been provided for various partners and businesses to utilise the brand for their own marketing purposes.

Lancaster has stepped up as one just eleven English Heritage Cities and is working with other cities such as London, York, Bath and Chester to develop its tourism market in the UK and internationally. European digital campaigns have commenced, targeting the French market initially. The Council has worked with Marketing Lancashire and Lancaster based tourism businesses at Travel Trade events in London and Birmingham.

The Council is now working with Marketing Lancashire, plus private and public sector partners, to develop a Destination Management Plan that will prioritise and identify investment for a number of actions that will help Lancaster develop as a destination. During early 2016/17, a similar process will begin for Morecambe Bay, working with partners around the Bay.

The Council is working with Lancaster University to support the development of iLancaster as a basis for digital information across the city, creating all sorts of possibilities for visitors to access information in the future. A number of consumer campaigns have promoted the area during the last year, including Festivals and Events, Christmas What's On and Heritage Open Days, Lancaster Heritage Trail, Get The Feel (Morecambe Bay), Cross Bay Walks, Morecambe Town Centre maps and the Morecambe Bay Visitor Guide (working with Bay Tourism). Developing campaigns include City of Outdoors and the Literary Trail.

The Council has worked with a private sector company to support the development of Lancaster Heritage Tours, which is now up and running and also, with Lancashire County Council on Lawless Lancaster tours, which will run throughout summer 2016 and include Lancaster Town Hall itself.

The Council has also taken part in Travel Trade events in London and Birmingham and attended Welcome and Visit Days with the Universities to support student recruitment alongside the visitor offer.

A key piece of work for 2016 will be the development, with partners, of the destination websites to promote local activities, attractions and venues. The destination websites will directly link to a range of other web platforms, including iLancaster and Marketing Lancashire to provide information within the local area and also far beyond it.

### **Visitor Information Centre's**

Lancaster and Morecambe's Visitor Information Centres (VIC's) remained busy during 2015/16 with estimated figures for enquiries at 110,000 and estimated gross income at £375k, which includes as well as £126k for the Platform.

The VIC's provide information to visitors from a wide range of local attractions and businesses, including the Council's own venues, adding considerably to their market presence. In addition, through retail and ticketing, the VIC's support 55 tourism businesses and 30 event organisers, providing a cost effective service that helps local businesses to develop as well as providing an income for the Council.

The review of the VIC's during the early part of 2016 will provide a number of options for delivery of visitor information and other visitor services.

### **Major events**

The Council worked closely with Arts partners and the BID to co-finance and deliver *Light Up Lancaster*, over two nights in November 2015. The festival was highly successful, attracting over 38,000 attendees and creating total economic activity of just under £754k, both figures a noticeable increase on the previous year. 89% of attendees rated the festival as excellent or good.

Light Up Lancaster is part of "Light Up the North" supported by the Arts Council to create a network of innovative Light Festivals across the north of England, along with Durham,

York, Leeds, Gateshead, Salford and Blackpool. During the last year links with Helsinki, Amsterdam and Eindhoven have been created to learn from our northern Europe partners who organise similar festivals but on a much larger scale and that attract European funding.

The *Vintage by the Sea* festival was a national finalist in the Visit England Tourism Awards, following winning the Lancashire Event of the Year award. The festival, which was delivered by the Council working in partnership with Deco Publique, Hemingway Design and Morecambe Town Council, brought over 40,000 people into Morecambe over two days in September 2015 and its economic impact has been estimated at over £916k.

## **SPORT & LEISURE**

### **Active Health Team**

Working with each GP surgery within the district the Active Health Team have continued their good work during the last twelve months. In excess of 1300 people have made use of the programme as a result of a medical referral path.

The sports centre has increased the number of 'health maintenance' classes in order to help people further improve after completing the twelve week programme.

Lancashire County Council fund the scheme and have recently offered the opportunity for organisations to tender to operate the schemes across Lancashire. The tender from Lancaster City Council was successful and sees a further minimum of three years funding in order for the scheme to continue at an increased value of £170k compared to the previous £100k. There is an additional option for the scheme to operate for a further two years depending on agreement between the two parties.

### **Salt Ayre Sports Centre (SASC)**

The agreement to proceed with the development project is without doubt the most significant piece of work within the sporting, leisure and cultural field this council has commissioned.

A £5m investment programme sees the start of a truly transformational series of changes to the existing facilities with a number of outcomes including reduced costs to the council (circa £0.5m per annum) and increased participation in physical activity by people of all ages and abilities. The facility will become iconic within the North West and demonstrates how progressive the council has become despite the financial pressures placed upon it from Government.

#### Examples of recent performance

- Holiday Programmes

More than 2100 children attended the 10 weeks of activities generating over £21k of income. Previous years at SASC have seen returns of circa £4k per annum for the holiday periods.

- Volunteering and Work Placement Programmes

SASC currently support 3 young adults, helping them gain the necessary skills and experience to gain employment. All of these young adults (aged between 15 and 22) through volunteering have gained invaluable knowledge and a sense of purpose, improved their social skills and improved confidence.

SASC also support the University of Cumbria and local high schools, taking ten students a year on placement.

- Disability Sports and Activities

SASC'S disability sport offer is leading the way in the North West. Our award winning Disability Cycling sessions (3x 1 hr 30min) are the most affordable and the only indoor sessions in the North West. There is an average of 90 attendees per week. Many are young adults, we have cyclists from Beaumont College and Bleasdale House accessing our specialist fleet of bikes.

SASC also organise and deliver a Disability Football session, which from this we have entered a team into the Lancashire Learning Disability League organised by

the Lancashire FA. We entered the FA Peoples' Cup and qualified for the regional competition.

SASC also deliver a multi-sports (10-15 attendees a week) and Disability afterschool club (10-12 attendees a week). From this we have forged good links with Morecambe Road and deliver Curriculum PE lessons (20 children)

SASC support Lancaster Bulldogs Wheelchair Basketball Team. Three years ago they moved to the centre, struggling to stay afloat, with help and guidance they have 30 adult players signed on and 50 children are registered for their junior sessions. The club is financially stable and growing from strength to strength.

The Disability Swimming Gala takes place annually at SASC. Over 100 young people with disabilities attend this event.

- Swimming Lessons/Provision

Currently we deliver 24 high quality individual 1:1's per week.

Some of these lessons are the most challenging we deliver. One child has Cerebral Palsy and is wheelchair bound and after weeks of hard work swam 400m. The swimmer also saw a consultant at Alder Hey children's hospital, and because of all the swimming the child did not need an operation.

SASC deliver 37 swimming lessons per week ranging from stage 1 to stage 8. There are 220 children enrolled onto lessons

- Gymnastics

The gymnastics enrolled total (gym 1 January – March 2016) stands at 439 children (331 in 2014/399 in 2015) and 99 on the revamped Gymny Crickets programme.

- Events and Festivals

National Play Day took place on Wednesday 5 August with over 2500 people attending. Waterslides took place over the summer at Williamson Park with over 400 children taking part. West End and Trumacar Primary School fun days took place in June with over 250 children taking part. There are a number of competitions run at Salt Ayre including the Dodgeball Festival, Rural 5-a-side Football Competition and Girls Football Competition. These competitions are attended by over 400 primary school children. We host a number of conferences including the Primary School Leadership Conference attended by over 100 children. We also organise the Sport Relief Mile attended by 150 to 200 people.

Other festivals and events include cycling and athletics events and disability awareness events.

- Leadership

We run a primary school leadership award called the Young Leaders Award. This award has been running for over 10 years and 2500 children have completed the training award. We also organise the level 2 and level 3 Sports Leaders Awards for local high schools. As part of this leadership award the students organise a fun run at Williamson Park. This was attended by over 40 people and raised money for St. John's Hospice.

- University of Cumbria Partnership

The links with the University of Cumbria are very strong. In addition to the £50k per annum agreement for use of the fitness facilities by staff and students, there are student placement options available. The team also deliver an events module which is part of the degree programme.

- After School Club/Curriculum school provision

As well as providing our own after school club offer, we have supported a number of local primary schools to deliver additional sporting activities to add to their after school provision. Over 300 children have attended our after school clubs. We have also delivered a healthy lifestyle programme to Morecambe Bay



Primary School with over 30 children taking part. We also provide Bellboating to local primary schools to help with team building and confidence.

- Salt Ayre running club

There is a running club which is attended by around 30 people each week including four families and therefore provides a good healthy family experience.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

- The actions in the Council's energy strategy are in the process of being delivered.
- Work is taking place to establish a publicly available infrastructure of charging points for electric vehicle. This in turn will make the use electric vehicles in the Council's fleet feasible.
- A detailed review of Council business travel has taken place and subsequent actions are being implemented.
- The Council's solar energy programme commenced in March 2012. Since then the Council has earned £225,000 in feed in tariffs ( £68,600 in the 2015 calendar year), saved 426,664 kg of CO2 and generated 785,260 Kwh of renewable energy (enough to boil 39,263,150 cups of tea)!!
- Changes in government policy that have massively reduced the incentives available for investment in renewable energy production mean that the project to build a solar farm on Council owned land near Middleton is not currently financially viable. However, if as expected in the medium term the cost of solar panels and associated technology decreases and the cost of electricity continues to increase then it may well present a viable option for the Council to consider. The work the Council has directly commissioned to date and the collaborative work the Council has been involved in with APSE energy means we are in a good position to progress this option if it can be demonstrated to be a viable one and in the best interests of the Council at the time.

## **Executive Annual Report 2015/16**

**Councillor Janice Hanson**

**Deputy Leader**

**Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder responsible for Economic  
Regeneration and Planning**

### **Executive Membership**

- **Cabinet** (Vice-Chairman)
- **Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group** (Chairman)
- **Housing Regeneration Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group** (Chairman)

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

- **Management Group of Lancaster Business Improvement District (BID)**
- **Morecambe Bay Partnership**

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Economic Regeneration and Planning

<b>CORPORATE PLAN - KEY OUTCOMES</b>	<b>SUCCESS MEASURES</b>
Sustainable economic growth and jobs will be created in key sectors, including energy, knowledge, health and the visitor economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ New and improved employment sites and premises will become available in key business locations targeting key sectors</li><li>□ Regeneration of central Morecambe</li></ul>

	<p>supported by the Morecambe Area Action Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Land Allocations, Arnside and Silverdale AONB and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Development Plan documents completed and adopted</li> <li>□ 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</li> <li>□ Level of support for business growth and skills development will be maximised</li> <li>□ Supporting small businesses as important components of thriving retail centres</li> <li>□ The development of the Assembly Rooms as an important visitor destination and enhancer of the local economy</li> </ul>
<p>The attractiveness and offer of the district, as a place to visit or invest in, will be improved</p> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Lancaster and Morecambe urban centres will be enhanced by investment in the built environment, heritage assets and the public realm</li> <li>□ 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</li> </ul>
<p>Enhanced quality of life of local residents through access to affordable, decent housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Increase number of affordable homes</li> </ul>

## **Progress made during 2015/16**

- Local Plan preparation to facilitate 13,000-14,000 new homes by 2031 has now taken place to the options for land allocations stage.
- Increased housing completions in 2015/16 rising to 420
- West End One element of Chatsworth Gardens in full development phase.
- Circa 100 Affordable dwellings facilitated this year to date.
- Adequate housing supply being addressed through planning decisions. 5 year land supply acknowledged as material consideration in all cases.
- Lancaster District Transport Master Plan completed in partnership with Lancashire County Council and ready for adoption in 2016.
- Morecambe Bay cycleway opened through supporting Morecambe Bay Partnership.
- Extensive consultation on "How we should plan for our districts future undertaken in Autumn 2015
- Arnsdale/Silverdale DPD public consultation on issues and Options completed.
- Public consultation of proposals for National Grid upgrade and Morecambe Bay cable tunnel during 2015.
- The City Council developed a Capability and Resilience partnership for the provision of Building Control services with Urban Vision during the year. The formalising of these arrangements for future years is now being undertaken through appropriate procurement procedures.
- The City Council has carefully responded to increase in workload and the potential for performance sanctions in Development Management during the year. This has resulted in a positive response to increase resources in this area, paid for by the significant increase in planning fees being received by the council.
- City Council supported the principle of becoming part of a Combined Authority with Lancashire Councils this year, and are working towards formalising proposals for public consultation.
- City Council reaffirmed its commitment to work with British Land to deliver an alternative development scheme for the Canal Corridor North.
- The council has established close partnership working with New River Retail to assist in the delivery of their investment proposals for the Arndale centre.

- The City Council has supported the Lancaster Business Improvement District through its successful vote to increase its term of operation, and has supported the partnerships championing the creation of a BID for Morecambe.
- The City Council continues to work with Carillion through its regeneration partnership arrangements with the County Council to investigate regeneration opportunities arising from the two council's property portfolios.
- The City Council has successfully transferred ownership of land at Bailrigg to the University of Lancaster to enable them to progress the Lancaster University Innovation Campus.
- The City Council continues to support the consortium of Lancashire and Cumbria local authorities responding positively to the National Grid North West Coastal Connections Project, and Dong Energy's West of Walney Extension Project.
- The City Council is assisting the County Council secure compliance with the Development Consent order for the Heysham/M6 Link Road.

## **Executive Annual Report 2015/16**

### **Councillor Margaret Pattison**

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for  
Markets, Voluntary Sector, Older People and ICT**

### **Executive Membership**

- **Cabinet**
- **Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group**

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

- **Lancaster Community Fund Grants Panel**

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Markets, Voluntary Sector, Older People and ICT

<b>Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes</b>	<b>Success Measures</b>
Communities are brought together and the major issues affecting the district are addressed through working in partnership	Maintain working arrangements with voluntary, community, faith, arts and culture groups in support of key service delivery
Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrate good governance, openness and transparency	Improve efficiency and effectiveness, reduce waste and develop customer service through re-shaping our services, using technology and collaborative working as appropriate
Sustainable economic growth	Supporting small businesses as important components of thriving retail centres

and jobs will be created in key sectors, including energy, knowledge, health and the visitor economy	
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## **Progress made during 2015/16**

### **Markets**

- Lancaster's charter market has continued to do well and provide and provide an additional attraction in the city centre on market days
- The Assembly Rooms has welcomed some new traders during the year and will benefit from the opening of the new Primark.
- Morecambe's festival market is located in the key location for the Morecambe Area Action Plan. Its' future will be considered within the wider context of delivery of the MAAP.

### **Voluntary Sector**

***The council commissions partners from the Voluntary and Community Faith Sector (VCFS) to deliver key activities as a contribution towards the achievement of outcomes in the Corporate Plan. The main areas of investment are:***

- **Advice and Information** - specialist advice and information services to help reduce levels of debt, poverty, personal distress and isolation; increase access to existing services and help reduce the need for other crisis services. The focus is on early intervention and prevention, helping to avoid crisis needs with the associated effect on the lives of families and individuals and reduce the potential need for mainstream and crisis services.
- **Infrastructure Support** - to help secure the future capacity of the VCFS to deliver important services in the district by supporting organisations to be more resilient and to deliver services that are relevant to the needs of the district.

- **Volunteering Coordination** - to increase levels of volunteering in order to increase the capacity of the VCFS to deliver services in the district and provide effective coordination of volunteers at a central point in support of a range of VCFS organisations.
- **Small Grants** – for the support and development of VCFS organisations and community groups and to protect or develop critical local services and test the feasibility of new local initiatives. An underpinning objective is the achievement of improved social capital in the district by supporting local people, groups and organisations to take an active part, and influence what happens, in their local area.

Our VCFS partners have performed reasonably well throughout the year, with some notable successes, whilst the nature and type of advice and support provided has evolved as a result of welfare reforms with partners now dealing with a widening range of inter-related needs as people make adjustments to their lifestyles. Taking into account the performance and delivery of services by our VCFS partners a decision has been made to extend contracts to 31 March 2017 with funding beyond that being subject to future budget requirements.

## **OLDER PEOPLE**

This year I formed a Cabinet/Champions group where we meet up every couple of months to share good practice which has been very interesting and useful in helping me fulfil my role as Cabinet Member for Older People.

I have engaged with pupils at two of the local secondary schools in connection with this area of my portfolio. I spoke to pupils at Heysham High about Dementia Awareness Training and to sixth form pupils at Morecambe High who had interviewed a number of over 70s and produced a short film ‘the good old days in Morecambe’ – a great example of local oral history.

I have spoken about my work with the over 55s to 38 Degrees at the Sanctuary Café in Morecambe and have met with the organisers of the Rainbow Centre in Morecambe and attended the Dementia Forum in Torrisholme.



I attended a screening of 'It's a Wonderful Life' at the Dukes with the Dementia Group last December and have participated in two sponsored walks for Alzheimer's Society. I was most proud of two young councillors, Lucy Atkinson and James Leyshon who joined me.

In December 2015 I was invited to County Hall by David Halpin who arranges the Older Peoples Champion Network in the Northwest. It was wonderful to listen to Dementia Friends of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School; the children have trained to be dementia friends through their after school club by supporting a local home for the elderly.

Looking ahead the areas which the network are keen to address include:

- Transport for over 55s
- Isolation and loneliness in the home
- Depression and mental health in the over 55s
- Safeguarding for vulnerable adults in their own home and Older People's homes
- Digital in the future for over 55s
- Good warm comfortable homes

In connection with homes I had the pleasure of touring Ripley Court with the Chief Officer (Health & Housing) to see how this housing for the over 55s had been upgraded. I came to the conclusion that I want to live there myself. It was a wonderful place with a very outgoing warden!

More recently, in February this year, Penny Foulds, Honorary Researcher at Lancaster University delivered a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the ground breaking and welcome research that had been undertaken at Lancaster University on a cure for Alzheimer's Disease. Anne Oliver from Age UK delivered a Dementia Friends Session at the same meeting to members that were present and hopefully this can be rolled out so all members and staff can benefit from this training.

## ICT

At the start of 2015/16 there was a major restructure of the ICT service, aimed at improving ICT support and development, in order to support the Council through its programme of future change. This has been largely successful although there have been difficulties in retaining and attracting people to the more skilled roles, possibly due to the influence of a national ICT skills shortage which is raising salary expectations beyond what we can offer. Measures to tackle this are ongoing.

A large amount of this year's effort has gone towards upgrading the ICT infrastructure and continually improving security arrangements. The former is to support ever more complex business needs while the latter ensures that these needs are met without compromise to the organisation's information security. ICT again achieved Public Services Network (PSN) connection compliance and supported the Finance service in achieving Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) compliance. Shortly there will be Wi-Fi available in all meeting rooms so that councillors can bring in their council devices to meetings; the first step towards paperless meetings perhaps!

Having moved to Windows 8.1 in the latter part of 2014/15, this has allowed us to extend the productive life of PCs and we've only needed to replace around 50 (8% of our total number) this year.

In terms of more service specific examples of ICT's work, having supported the Elections team in procuring and implementing a new elections system, the ICT service ensured its availability and smooth running during the May elections. Immediately following the elections equipment was rolled out to all new councillors in an efficient manner. Also, using both their technical and procurement skills, the ICT service has also been able to assist the Sport and Leisure team in selecting a development partner for Salt Ayre.

In terms of responsiveness, asbestos problems in the basement of Lancaster Town Hall and storm Desmond both threw up big challenges of keeping the computers running and providing the infrastructure for relocating staff, but these were met by dedicated staff putting enormous effort in –right across the Council, including ICT. With the asbestos problems Revenues staff were evacuated from the basement at 4pm on Friday and ICT had a business as usual telephone system ready for 9am on Monday with every member of Revenues staff relocated and working by 5pm that day. When Desmond hit ICT staff

had a generator brought in and worked through the Saturday night to have systems ready for the District Emergency Control Centre and all Sunday and Monday to have systems up and ready for 9am Tuesday when both the Town Halls were reopened. It would be great if the need for such challenges could always be avoided – but life isn't that simple and so it's good to know that services and staff have got the wherewithal to deal with situations if and when needed.

Looking forwards the ICT team are now working on developing a modern customer relationship management (CRM) system to meet the future needs of the Council and the changing world of digital. At the same time they are replacing the traditional telephone system with a full unified communications and collaboration suite.

Customer Services are also working with colleagues in ICT to review our existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform with a view to improvement, to offer a better, more customer- focused and efficient service in the future.

Members may have heard reference to “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. Self-service also reduces demand on the back office and customer services, and in time it too should deliver savings and Customer Service Advisers are working with customers to encourage them to self-serve through the Council's website, where possible. The capability for this will expand greatly in the coming months and years. Nonetheless, we need to ensure that customers continue to experience an acceptable level of service and customer satisfaction. The Council's website has been revamped with a single sign on option for customers to access many Council services under one log in. Measures like this will make it much easier to do business with us – and give us much better customer intelligence.

A relationship is building with ISS at Lancaster University with collaborative working towards the iLancaster app, providing information for citizens, tourists and students on the move, and a public Wi-Fi trial at a number of locations in Lancaster and Morecambe.

It is a challenging but exciting time.

## Executive Annual Report 2015/16

Councillor David Smith

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for  
Community Safety and Clean and Green**

### **Executive Membership**

- Cabinet
- District Wide Tenants Cabinet Liaison Group
- Health and Safety Joint Consultative Committee

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

- Community Safety Partnership
- Lancashire Waste Partnership (Waste Management Strategy Steering Group)

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Community Safety  
Clean and Green

Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes	Success Measures
Impact of crime and anti-social behaviour across the district will be minimised	<input type="checkbox"/> Work with the Police and Community Safety Partners to minimise the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce hate crime and the fear of crime felt by minority communities
The council's impact on the environment will be minimised	<input type="checkbox"/> Amount of household waste reused, recycled or composted is maintained
Local neighbourhoods are clean and safe and residents	<input type="checkbox"/> Perception of people who live in, work in, or visit the district that streets and public spaces are

have a sense of pride in the district	safe and clean is increased □ Increased number of projects that directly involve local communities in improving local areas, parks and open spaces
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### **Progress made during 2015/16**

- Chaired the Lancaster District Community Safety partnership. Meetings have focussed on the the key community safety issues for the District and looked at performance in these areas and how as a partnership we can best address them.
- In 15/16 the Council directly contributed to the provision of CCTV, PCSOs, a pan Lancashire project to reduce Domestic violence and initiatives to reduce hate crime.
- At local levels a PSPO and a range of other supporting activities were put in place to address some local issues in the Ridge estate.
- Frontline Council staff were trained to help address the problem of child sexual exploitation.
- The CSP has used the Executive Group Meeting to focus on the District Priorities: Domestic Abuse, Violence Against the Person, Road Safety & burglary in other than a dwelling.
- The CSP has funding the following projects within the district: Freedom Project, DA leaflet reprint, Ridge Response, EASY Project.
- Worked closely with the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner to fund the Sports Project run by Strawberry Fields Training.

- The CSP had oversight of Community Trigger Reviews, NPS Task Group and Chelsea's Choice.
- The 2014/15 household reuse, recycling and composting figures reveal that the rate for the Lancashire-12 area of 47.3% was in excess of the North West rate of 46.5% and the England average of 43.7%. At the local authority level, recycling, reuse and composting rates varied between lows of 31.7% in Burnley and just 32.8% in Rossendale, to 50.0% in Fylde and 51.1% in Wyre. The rates had fallen in seven of the 14 Lancashire authorities over the previous year and were down marginally in the Lancashire-12 area. Lancaster's rate in 2014/15 was 42.9% which represented a 0.4% increase on the previous year. The most recent we figures we have which are for the first 6 months of 2015/16 are 49.9%.
- Lancashire is one of the safest areas in the country with crime and other community safety issues, such as anti-social behaviour and road accidents at their lowest level for years. Around nine out of ten respondents (87%) to a recent Living in Lancashire survey consider their local area to be safe. Between February 15 and January 16 there were 66.79 crimes per 1000 people in the Lancaster District. This is exactly in line with the average across Lancashire.
- The Living in Lancashire surveys produced by the County Council have been used to monitor the perception of people with regards to safety and cleanliness and identify any potential trends or areas for action. As an example (no 48- June 2015) showed that 63% of respondents (from across Lancashire) were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the cleanliness of the streets and pavements in their local area a further 10% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied, only 8% were very dissatisfied.
- The efforts of Town and Parish Councils, community groups, friends of groups and individuals in helping maintain the appearance of our District have been very much appreciated. Masterplans for Ryelands and Greaves Park were approved during the year. Active friends of groups have undertaken much good work in our parks including Williamson Park, Happy Mount Park, Greaves Park, Regent Park

and Ryelands Park. Many groups have organised litter picks, planting events, in bloom entries and other activities on areas of open space throughout the District.

Another challenging year for the council as a whole. Hard decisions had to be made around the budget. I would like to thank all staff for their dedication, hard work and understanding during financially difficult times for the city council. Also a thank you to fellow councillors for their assistance and understanding.

A thank you to Mark Davies for his help and advice over the year. Obviously we will strive to provide residents with the best possible services we can under present conditions. Thanks again to everyone concerned.

## **Executive Annual Report 2015/16**

**Councillor Anne Whitehead**

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for  
Finance and Revenues and Benefits**

### **Executive Membership**

- **Cabinet**

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Finance, Revenues and Benefits

### **Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures**

<b>Corporate Plan - Key Outcomes</b>	<b>Success Measures</b>
Well run, value for money services that are valued by the public and demonstrate good governance, openness and transparency	<input type="checkbox"/> Gain an 'unqualified' value for money conclusion from our External Auditors

### **Progress made during 2015/16**

#### **Finance**

As in previous years, planning for and responding to the Government's austerity measures and the ongoing year on year reductions in funding have 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 June of 2015 that there had been a net underspending of £553K at outturn for General Fund services in 2014/15, with a similar underspending of £536K on council housing services.

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

As Council will be aware, however, the main financial task has not only been to set a balanced budget for next year, but also to address the added pressure of tackling the medium term to 2020.

This year's budget process was very different from recent times, therefore. A four year financial planning horizon was adopted, and this ultimately proved to be a sound move, given the Government's subsequent announcement of a four-year provisional Settlement offer.

The Council went into the 2016 budget process expecting to have to reduce its annual spending by around £2M. As it turned out, forecasts were worse than anticipated and so it is a real credit to Members and Officers alike that at Budget Council in March, an annual savings package of around £2.8M was ultimately agreed. This was neither a pleasant nor an easy task. Given the choice, I think that the Council would have preferred to protect more services from inevitable reductions, and to avoid introducing charges for others.

The achievement is even more significant as for the first time (as long as anybody can remember) the Council balanced its budget for two years, covering 2017/18 too. Unfortunately it still leaves another £2.7M of estimated annual savings to be found by 2020, as well as dealing with all the practicalities of implementing the budget savings already approved.

Arrangements are in hand to put into place monitoring arrangements as appropriate for the budget measures agreed. Key projects such as Salt Ayre redevelopment and Green Waste charging will have more regular updates available than the usual quarterly

reporting, in recognition of their significance. Also, we have now received the very brief requirements for signing up to the Government's four-year Settlement offer and they will be brought before Members as soon as possible. Other planned Government changes, such as the move to 100% business rates retention, will need a lot more work to assess their likely implications, including the impact of power station rating and any other large rateable property changes.

Looking forward, the Finance service has recently been going through a restructuring exercise to make some savings and better place it to deal with forthcoming challenges. Inevitably there will be more resourcing/capacity/prioritisation of workload challenges to face in the coming year.

## **Revenues & Benefits**

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

- **Universal Credit (UC).** The Lancaster district went live on UC in December 2014, starting with the simplest cases. The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) administers UC in the main, but there is a lot of information-sharing between the two organisations, and the Council is positioned to provide some support to UC applicants, on behalf of DWP. Enquiries through Customer Services are slowly increasing, although the assessment team continues to experience issues with the processes (as they link to DWP); these are being highlighted to DWP on a regular basis and they are still on-going.

The current number of claims in January 2016 in the Lancaster City Council area affected by Universal Credit is 270, an increase from 191 in October 2015. There is clearly a long way to go before UC can be rolled out fully, in an effective manner.

- **Customer Services.** 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 (as briefly mentioned above) for UC claimants in financial difficulty, as referred from the local job centre, but they have received minimal referrals to date.
  
- **Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS).** The LCTS scheme benefits were maintained during 2015/16 and in the autumn, Council took the decision to retain the same scheme for 2016/17, ahead of a review for future years.
  
- **Business Rates.** The service has adapted to deal with the many changes, such as the myriad property relief schemes now in place, and is dealing with the difficulties of rate avoidance tactics. Preparation is underway to administer a Business Improvement district for the Morecambe area. Furthermore, the service is still working with Financial Services to develop and refine the management information and forecasting for business rate income, to assist with the Council’s corporate financial planning.

More generally for the service, budget savings targets have been achieved and despite reducing operating costs, local taxation collection rates have been maintained. The service continues to perform well in processing benefits promptly and accurately; on average 21 days for new claims and 9 days for changes in circumstances, an improvement on last year.

Looking forward, the focus remains on shaping service delivery to manage new Government initiatives effectively and on optimising performance in what continues to be a difficult environment. There will also be an emphasis on channel shift (meaning moving from face-to-face and telephone contacts to online interactions for our “digital” customers). We plan to educate and support our customers to deal with some enquiries on their own through the self-serve functionality which will be made available more widely through the Council’s website.

## Executive Annual Report 2015/16

Councillor Karen Leytham

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for  
Housing and Environmental Health**

### **Executive Membership**

- **Cabinet**
- **Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Council**
- **District Wide Tenants Cabinet Liaison Group**
- **Housing Regeneration Cabinet Liaison Group** (Chairman)

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

- **Health and Wellbeing Partnership**

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Housing  
Environmental Health

### **Corporate Plan Key Outcomes/Success Measures**

Enhanced quality of life of local residents through access to affordable, decent housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased number of improved homes <input type="checkbox"/> Improve access to housing <input type="checkbox"/> Increase number of affordable homes
Health and wellbeing of our citizens is improved	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining adequate supply to reduce demand led unsustainable price rises in the housing market <input type="checkbox"/> New build council social housing is energy efficient <input type="checkbox"/> Improve the wellbeing of our residents through collaborative, preventative and

	reactive measures <input type="checkbox"/> Increased number of people participating in sports and leisure activities <input type="checkbox"/> Maximise opportunities for access to innovative leisure activities by working collaboratively with public and private sector partners <input type="checkbox"/> Increased number of vulnerable households benefiting from Warm Homes Initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate long term improvements in transportation to improve local air quality <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain percentage of “broadly” compliant food businesses (category 3-5) <input type="checkbox"/> Work in partnership to optimise access to welfare benefits and related support
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## **Progress made during 2015/16**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

### **Public Health**

#### **Pest control**

No-one wants to suffer a pest infestation and the health or property damage it can cause. The council's very popular Pest Control team continues to meet high levels of demand, servicing over 2,500 requests a year from the public to deal with a variety of pests. The team also continues to increase income through commercial (142 contracts are now in place) and undertaking new areas of work, for example bird proofing, generating almost £60K from such contract work in the past year. In March 2016 the team has delivered well-received best practice advice to other Lancashire councils' pest control officers and promoted our commercially focussed activities.. In line with new international requirements, our pest control officers have completed accreditation to ensure that the council complies with the new Pest Control Stewardship Scheme which comes into force in 2016.

### Dog wardens

The Dog Warden team have also been very busy throughout the previous 12 months.

Recognising public concern about dog fouling, we have piloted a part-time post of Dog Fouling Enforcement Officer. This highly flexible post worked non-standard hours and being free from operational distractions facing our regular dog wardens, was able to spend a lot more focussed time visiting open spaces and locations of reported concern, talking to residents and dog owners, identifying dog fouling hot spots, and targeting enforcement. This received a very positive reception and saw a real increase in public awareness about the council's enforcement activity. Some dog walkers undoubtedly changed their behaviour, perhaps paying closer attention to carrying poo bags or using them more consistently. However there remains a small percentage of brazen offenders who seem determined not to pick up after their dogs. During a survey period to July 2015 and based on 265 observations made by council enforcement officers we noted that 98.1% of the time dog fouling was cleared up. In every case where dog fouling offending is witnessed we pursue enforcement action. Typically we will issue a fixed penalty notice however we may prosecute instead if warranted by individual circumstances.

A Dog Warden Apprentice was appointed in September in conjunction with Runshaw College and the council's Modern Apprenticeship programme. Her training is now almost complete and she will assist in meeting the council's obligations around dog control. She will also be involved in the educational element in this area of work as well as dealing with noise nuisance from barking dogs. In 2015/16 the team worked with the Dogs Trust to microchip over 200 dogs in the borough. The team have also set up a Facebook page which is proving to be particularly useful in tracing the owners of stray dogs picked up by the team.

### Public health

In November a new Public Health & Protection Manager was appointed. The former Public Health and Environmental Protection Teams have been brought together and in addition to overseeing their work the role will involve looking at ways the council can improve public health generally and reduce health inequalities. This will involve making a baseline assessment of public health in the Lancaster district, highlighting ward-level

variations from expected averages and any specific areas of health inequality, and identifying what can be done to improve public health.

Poor public health places huge impacts and costs on families, employers and the NHS. Looking to the future, the nation's health is predicted to get even worse as a result of diet and lifestyle choices including low levels of exercise and recreation. Often there are common causes and solutions to a range of public health problems, whether diet / substance/ exercise-related or mental health-related. Officers will be working closely with our public health partners to tackle local health priorities, including supporting communities to help themselves.

## **Environmental Protection**

### Nuisance and anti-social behaviour

The Environmental Health service responds to over 1,000 requests a year for assistance with problems of neighbour noise / nuisance or anti-social behaviour. Ultimately we pursue regulatory powers to intervene formally and take legal action where necessary to stop serious problems, however this can take time. The team is currently trialling a much quicker alternative intervention (which we call 'door-stepping') in suitable cases. This involves visiting the people accused of causing the problem and having a no-blame, grown-up conversation to find out if the hassles of longer-running formal investigation can be avoided. This is an innovative re-think of service delivery and the early indications are positive.

### Air quality

Work on improving air quality continues to gather pace. We have been leading on an area of work in partnership with public health staff at County and planning colleagues to produce air quality planning guidance as well as making a significant contribution to the transport master plan for Lancaster with the aim of improving air quality across the borough. We have also been successful in securing a grant of almost £300K to fit clean emissions technology to 17 buses which travel through the Air Quality Management Area in central Lancaster.

The council continues to invest significant effort in addressing its responsibilities. Air pollution monitoring within the three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) shows little improvement and continued exceedance of air quality objectives for nitrogen dioxide. Whilst a national assessment undertaken however indicates that compliance with air quality standards is anticipated within the Lancashire area by 2020, our current local air quality monitoring results suggests that is very unlikely to happen. Local action to address air quality based health impacts is essential. During the past year there has been substantial media coverage about revised estimates of how poor air will impact on people's health. New national research into the impact specifically of the pollutant nitrogen dioxide (the pollutant of issue in Lancaster) means that these estimates are likely to worsen significantly. After smoking, poor air quality is probably the most significant impactor on health in the UK.

Following the council's adoption of the Air Quality Strategy in 2013, we have been pursuing its implementation particularly through working with the County Council. The most important element of this is consultation on the Transport Master Plan for Lancaster, due for adoption in May 2016. Work on the detailed content of the plan will take place over the following years and air quality improvement will be a key consideration. As our outdoor air quality issues in Lancaster are all traffic related, the Transport Master Plan is the main air quality action delivery plan to address air quality issues in central Lancaster.

Three key actions in 2015/16 are worthy of specific note:

- The M6/Heysham link road under construction and due to open in 2016. Whilst public opinion on the road's transportation benefits may be divided, traffic alleviation once the new road opens together with associated planning commitments may be sufficient to adequately overcome air quality concerns underpinning Carnforth's formal air quality management area. Also to reduce traffic impacts and resulting air pollution concentrations in both the Lancaster and Galgate air quality management areas.
- The council, with the support of other Lancashire authorities, is in the final stages of drafting new air quality planning guidance for Lancaster. The guidance



presents standard requirements for new development, particularly the provision of charging infrastructure to support the use of electric vehicles. It also directs a better assessment methodology that allows better consideration of the impact of mitigating measures and residual impacts. This guidance is being produced in a template format suitable for ready adoption by other councils in Lancashire. A Lancashire launch event, working with the county council's Public Health service is planned for Spring/Summer 2016.

- The county council with the support of Lancaster City Council Environmental Health and Stagecoach buses applied for a grant to reduce emissions from the most frequent bus services passing through the Lancaster air quality management area. The grant bid was successful and a full grant award of £288,150 was awarded in January 2016 to retrofit 17 buses (the number 2,2A 2X and 3 bus services) to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from these buses by over 90%. This is great news for people's health protection in central Lancaster and the project is due to be delivered in 2016/17.

### Major projects

The Environmental Protection team has been busy assessing and dealing with the potential implications of new planning proposals including a number of high-profile projects. Much of this work takes place quietly and unseen at the planning stage, even before construction work commences, to prevent or minimise impacts on local communities, although the team will also monitor ongoing work to ensure any agreed controls and conditions are being complied with.

### **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. Building on the three partnerships, we have provided additional food hygiene training for employees and plan to introduce pre-inspection audits at the requests of our partners. These additional services are all chargeable and help support the strategy of increasing service sustainability through income generation.

The success of the Primary Authority Partnerships helps to support local business growth and the Council is now exploring additional strategic partnerships with local businesses to expand the Primary Authority portfolio.

Officers have investigated 316 cases of infectious diseases, to help determine the source of the infections and to help reduce the risk of further spread. Particular focus is directed at identifying outbreaks associated with food premises and to help ensure that those affected are not working with high risk individuals or within a food business. The Council completed its support to Public Health England with the investigation into the spread of an infectious disease known as Giardia. There have been numerous notified cases of this infection locally and the study will help to grow understanding and control of this debilitating infective agent.

We have responded to 386 service requests in 2015/16 relating to food standards, safety and quality. Appropriate investigation and improvement/enforcement action has been taken in every case and 2 food businesses have been prosecuted in 2015/16 for food hygiene offences and a third business has been issued a formal caution as an alternative to prosecution.

The Food and Safety manager took a regional lead role in preparations for Environmental Health participation in the International food fraud investigation "OPSON" co-ordinated by the Food Standards Agency and Intellectual Property Office. The Council's Food Safety team undertook a number of inspections during November to support OPSON, focussing on Traceability and over two days, working with the Police, carried out road side stops of over 200 commercial vehicles to check food transportation.

The Council has conducted a number of food seizures due to lack of traceability paperwork to provide sufficient evidence of the source of the products. This includes the seizure and destruction of a large quantity of frozen game with a wholesale value of over

£40,000. In addition to the value of the game, the company concerned also had to pay the Council's legal costs, storage and disposal costs which increased the total loss to the business to around £60,000.

We have developed a new approach to tackling poor standards in our non-compliant food businesses by offering business coaching to the food business operator. This program of coaching uses a combination of behavioural change techniques and carefully crafted language to support long term change and improved standards of compliance. Although the project is new, we have had some very promising responses from the participants and is championed as national good practice.

The food team is actively exploring opportunities for generating income to help achieve a sustainable, fit for purpose food safety service. Potential income generation includes charging for specialist advice services for existing and new food businesses, expanding the training courses available, and production of a food safety management pack for sale to new & existing businesses and the introduction of pre-inspection food safety audits.

514 food businesses have been inspected, unannounced, to check hygiene and food safety standards are being maintained. Consumers will now be familiar with the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme stickers displayed by many businesses rating the business from 0 (Urgent Improvement required) to 5 (Very Good). 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 Lancaster bar that served a cocktail containing Liquid Nitrogen to an 18 year old causing serious, life changing injuries, was fined £100,000 and £40,000 costs. The case sends 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 continued to deal with a variety of emergency incidents throughout the year. A burglary causing internal damage at Morecambe Town Hall necessitated the Business Continuity plans being implemented so that essential functions could continue despite access to various offices being lost for several days.

Contingency plans have been updated during the year and the Emergency officers also participated in various emergency exercises and training events. This preparation was invaluable when Storm Desmond caused severe flooding, bridge closures and a power blackout in Lancaster in December. Business continuity arrangements enabled the Emergency Control Centre in the Town Hall to continue to have power and lighting and also the Emergency Rest Centre at Salt Ayre. Council employees voluntarily turned out to staff the room so that the Council could respond to the emergency. The debrief

process will identify any areas where planning can be further improved but the workforce responded magnificently to an unprecedented emergency situation.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING AND CEMETERIES**

### **Housing Standards**

- The private rented sector continues to grow and play an important role within the housing sector, reflected by a number of new initiatives and regulations published this year by Central Government directed at improving the quality of rental accommodation, and in particular dealing with so-called rogue landlords.
- The Housing Standards Team continues to work across the district to improve standards of accommodation and management by reducing the worst hazards, tackling fuel poverty and improving fire safety. Over the past year the team has worked closely with Lancaster University to set up their approved property scheme, encouraging good student properties and landlords to self-regulate. This will allow resources to be concentrated on enforcement of the problematic landlords.
- Other partners the team works with include Environmental Health, Licensing, The Fire Service, and increasingly Health and Social care. Work on developing the private rented sector to help in the prevention of homelessness is ongoing. A new initiative this year has been work with Serco, who act on behalf of The Home Office, to provide Asylum Seekers with good quality accommodation.
- A successful bid for funding in 2014 is allowing the team to focus on addressing poor quality housing in parts of Morecambe and tackle the underlying social and health needs of residents.
- The Housing Standards Team were amongst the first to respond to residents' needs during the recent flooding, and that work will continue over the coming year with the administration of Flood Resilience Grants.

## Home Improvement Agency

- 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. Handyperson services are also available to carry out minor works. The HIA is also responsible for delivering the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant programme.
- In 2015/16 the HIA successfully secured external funding under a new three year collaboration agreement with Lancashire County Council. This funding enabled the HIA service to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable residents. The new agreement provides funding to deliver core home improvement services including housing advice, support and handyperson services. Under the new agreement the HIA are also responsible for the delivery of minor disabled adaptations for residents throughout the district.
- 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 2015/16 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. The HIA has also been actively involved in assisting vulnerable residents affected by the recent flooding caused by storms Desmond and Eva.

- Throughout 2015/16 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.

### **Housing Options (Homelessness)**

- Homeless acceptances have reduced to the lowest figure since the P1E data collection began. With the introduction of five new Homeless Prevention Officers (HPOs) the team are now working at an even earlier stage and this has resulted in an increase in the numbers of successful homeless prevention cases. This being said 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 remains one of the biggest challenges for assisting homeless under 35's. We are also still unsure of the impacts of the roll out of the new Universal Credit. The new proposals set out by Government to align Local Housing Allowance Rents in social housing and the possible impacts to temporary accommodation is also a real concern in terms of its potential impact on homelessness. 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 HPOs. The funding from the DCLG for single homeless provides pre-tenancy training, shared housing and a new accommodation finding service. The HPOs also support 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 funding for this service is 'at risk' from March 2017 due to the cuts in the Lancashire County Council Supporting People Programme so unless the provider Safenet can source other funding the service may potentially close.
- The county council alongside the district council are undertaking a review of the Lancashire wide Homeless 16/17 year olds protocol.
- 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 Methodist Action North West (MANW), 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. This year, and in 2016/17, MANW are delivering more empty homes with additional funding from Lancaster City Council to bring more properties into the Social Lettings Agency.
- 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](http://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](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 opened in April 2015. The new 23 bed supported housing scheme provides 6 crisis beds, 12 move on beds and 5 self-contained semi-independent flats for the over 25's. The scheme also delivers a wide range of on-site services including health, drug, alcohol, training, education and in work support. The county council cuts to supporting people funding now threatens the long term viability of this centre.
- An interim review of the Homeless Strategy is planned to take place in 2016/17 given all the impending SP budget cuts and changes in legislation.

## **Cemeteries**

- The Cemeteries Team has continued to provide a caring, sensitive and professional service to the bereaved throughout 2015/16. This year has seen a complete change in the office based staff. The Cemeteries Officer and the Cemeteries Support Assistant are both new to their respective posts. Both of these members of staff are exceptional officers and their presence will only serve to enhance the level of service provided by the Cemeteries Team.

## **COUNCIL HOUSING**

- 2015/2016 has been a challenging year for the service with a wealth of proposals and changes, stemming from Government, affecting future financing and future service delivery. These issues were added to with the December floods wiping out the council housing office base at 38 Cable Street. Over the last few months the service has been temporarily operating from Lancaster Town Hall.

Our council housing continues to make 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 3740 homes to rent with just over 29% of the housing stock being sheltered or bungalow accommodation.

Despite these issues over the last year the council carried out a tenant satisfaction survey which found that overall tenant satisfaction with the service remains at 84%, and this is in line with the 2013 survey findings.

Repairs and maintenance is the service most likely to be mentioned as a priority by tenants, analysis also shows this to be a service aspect found to be important in influencing a tenant's overall satisfaction. There is an indication that tenant satisfaction for the repairs and maintenance service has improved slightly since 2013 (82% compared to 79%).

Listening to tenants' views and acting on them also emerges as a key driver of satisfaction with the council's housing services. Looking at the way the council handles council housing enquiries amongst those who have contacted the council in the last 12 months perceptions of the helpfulness of staff remain very positive (82% satisfied), with a significant increase since 2013 in the satisfaction with the final outcome of enquiries (72% compared to 65%).

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

- Last year I reported that the council had adopted a policy that for 2016/17 onwards target rent increases be set at 3% per annum, and that this should ensure that the future funding needs of council housing are met both in the medium term, and the long term. It was intended that over the coming year the council would undertake a review to establish a rent setting policy that would support 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. However, due to dramatic changes in the Government's policy on the future financing of social housing it has not been possible to move forward with the council's ambitions to build new council housing or even think of acquiring properties. Members will be aware that the Government is imposing a 1% reduction in social housing rents, each year, over the next four years, and are introducing a number of other proposals that will have a significant impact on the funds available to deliver its council housing service, including the proposals to enforce the sale of high value council homes when they become vacant. The restrictions on rent setting brought about by the change in Government policy are estimated to cost around £90M over the life of the council's Housing Revenue Account 30-year business plan. This raised significant questions over the viability of any new-build plans and requires further efficiency-drives from the service.

- The Government is introducing many changes over the coming year which will affect the way the council can deliver its council housing services. These include a requirement for the council to charge up to market rent levels for households with a joint income more than £30,000 with the additional revenue paid to central government, the introduction of further caps on the amount of housing benefit tenants can receive with these proposals particular affecting single 36 year olds and under, and potentially older tenants in sheltered housing. The Government is also ending 'lifetime tenancies' with the proposal that all new tenants will be given short term tenancies of up to 5 years term which will then be reviewed at the end of that period to see if the household still has a social housing need. All these issues will need to be explored and appraised over the coming year as the details become known.
- Despite this situation, 2015/2016 has seen 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 again 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.
- It is projected that over 350 households will have been rehoused by the council over the year. The demand for council housing has fallen to 1906 applicants on the council's housing register; a significant reduction over the year mainly due to household with low housing priority not renewing their applications. Those in greatest need in Band A and Band B form 8.5% of the register (162 households). The number of applicants in Band C Medium Housing Need form 37.6% of the housing register (716 households). However the greatest proportion of applicants are in Band D Low Housing Need and Band E Very Low Housing Need; together forming just over 53.9% of the register (1028 households). The highest demand for accommodation remain for one and two bedroom properties forming 87% of the households on the housing register but the council's ability to meet this demand has been constrained.

- Preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour, working together with residents and other agencies, on the council's estates remains a high priority. The housing management team have again dealt with over 160 new cases during 2015/2016 but a reduction on previous years. Again the greatest number of complaints, related to noise nuisance (35). Other areas of main complaints continue to verbal abuse, pets, and untidy gardens. Over 2016 responding to the feedback we have received through the Tenant Satisfaction Survey we are looking to improve the support we give to victims of these issues, and also how we can intensively work with a small number of households to prevent issues arising in the first place.
- 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 inspection with councillors of the services provide. Every year the District-wide Tenants' Forum is allocated funding to support community projects to improve the environment of the council housing estates and neighbourhoods. 2015/2016 saw over £66,000 funding a variety of projects supported across the district. This is an important programme and engages tenants and residents in the work of the council, and is central to the way the council engages with residents, supporting them to help improve their neighbourhoods. All tenants have been recently asked for projects to be put forward for the 2016/2017 programme. Projects can include play areas, improving community spaces, up-grading neglected areas, improved communal lighting, new signs, and landscaping work.

Again over this next year we want to review the arrangements with the District-wide Tenants Forum to ensure that all tenants can be involved, and the work of the Forum is relevant to tenants, and the council.