

## **Executive Annual Report 2018/19**

### **Councillor Nathan Burns**

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Skills, ICT, Digital Strategy, Customer Services and Communications**

### **Executive Membership**

- Cabinet

### **Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities**

Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Skills, ICT, Digital Strategy, Customer Services and Communications

### **Progress made during 2018/19**

#### **Skills**

In the year 2018/19:

- The Lancaster District Skills Forum has agreed its terms of reference. The forum is a strong group speaking as one voice for the Lancaster District and has representation from local schools, business, Universities, third sector groups and the LEP.
- A partnership is in place with the National College for Nuclear (Northern Hub) around Energy Skills. The partnership is between Lakes College, Sellafield Ltd, EDF Energy, Bridgwater and Taunton College, the University of Cumbria and the University of Bristol. Lancaster and Morecambe College will become a local spoke of the Hub and the Council is involved as an interested partner.
- Employment Skills Plans came into force in September associated with planning applications of a particular size and are now coming through to the Business and Skills Team to review.
- The Council is engaged with the Eden Project North in relation to skills along with Lancaster and Morecambe College. The College has developed a 25 year Skills Plan with Eden Project North and an Eden Skills Hub.
- The Council is directly engaging with schools and two officers are acting as Enterprise Advisers for Central High School and Lancaster Girls Grammar School.
- The Council is now a member of the LEP Skilled and Productive Workforce and the Future Workforce networking groups.

## ICT/Digital Strategy

In the year 2019/19:

- Assisted with the Museum transfer to set up all hardware and software systems and building links to allow a seamless handover.
- Commenced the Windows 10 upgrade to roll out the new operating system (over 25% of devices upgraded).
- Replaced hard drives of Council desktops with Solid State Devices to extend machine life and improve speed to make efficiencies and savings.
- Brought the new back-up data centre at SALC online.
- Created an electronic system to allow Legal to commence disposal of paper files to make physical space savings.
- Introduced Geo-blocking of connections external to the UK to prevent cyber attacks and further secure the network and our data.
- Rollout of Cyber Security training through the Learning Zone system.
- Secured a Local Government Association grant of £25,000 to support the development of the Customer Experience Platform.
- Continued work with digital stakeholders in the district around the expansion of full-fibre with the ambition of making Lancaster Britain's first "gigabit district".

## Customer Services

In the year 2018/19 Customer Services:

- Said "How can I help you" to 126,285 customers
- Collected £151,735 in payments to the council.
- Provided personal budgeting support to assist 130 Universal Credit claimants in managing their household income and expenditure.
- Worked closely with the council's Homeless team to introduce the changes made to their referral system.
- Put in place a more agile way of working enabling the Customer Service team to work with a greater degree of flexibility across our telephony and face to face areas.
- Enabled 12 Customer Service Assistants to become Dementia Friends.
- Helped 5237 customers to sign up or renew their Garden Waste subscription.

## Communications

The following was achieved in the year 2018/19:

### Place Marketing

- Successfully launched the Lancaster Story to a wide range of stakeholders and partners. The story launch was accompanied by new branding assets and visual language which is being adapted locally by businesses. An exciting promotional video showcasing the Lancaster region was created and to date has been seen more than 15k times. Following the launch event, the Lancaster story has engagement levels across social media exceeding 3.5million. We now have a dedicated social media presence promoting the district to a global audience.
- A newly created Lancaster Place Board which is charged with being guardian of the newly created Lancaster brand and place story aimed at attracting investment, jobs, visitors and creating an even better environment for residents to live in. This independent group of influential local people business leaders will provide strategic leadership for the promotion and development of Lancaster regionally, nationally and internationally. This group will be charged with the development of a Place

Champions networking group open to all businesses, educational institutions and community groups.

## Marketing & Comms

- Through its communications and marketing operations, the city council communications team has taken an active role in promoting the district, handling press and other media enquiries effectively and supporting elected members with communications expertise. Examples of high profile issues that have benefitted from communications support include the launch of the Lancaster Place brand, the opening of the Morecambe wave reflection wall, the relaunched Canal Quarter, Eden Project North and economic development opportunities throughout the district including Heysham gateway, Bailrigg and Health Innovation Campus.
- The marketing & communications team have provided support by way of brand and marketing campaigns to events and festival like Highest Point Music Festival, Light Up Lancaster, Vintage By The Sea, Kite Festival, Morecambe Carnival, Morecambe Music Festival, and Lancaster on Ice which saw more than 40k visitors to the district. The communications team recently successfully coordinated a major media launch for the Lancaster British Cycling GP coming to the district in June 2019.
- The corporate marketing function has continued to provide expertise to the council's commercial venues and services such as Salt Ayre leisure centre, VMU and The Platform. Contributing to their success and increased income through a mix of activity including production of print materials, social media and advertising. Recent success stories has seen the income generated for The Platform increase year on year by 50%.

## Digital Audience

- The council's website continues to be developed with the addition of extra functionality through the addition of more online payment facilities as the council looks to continue the move towards having more of its communications online. The introduction of a bespoke webpage branding module has improved how the council presents information on its commercial services online as part of its overall strategy of increasing footfall and income. In 2018 the website saw a total of 3.3million total views, a 9% increase on 2017.

## Social Media

- The council's social media channels have continued to be developed with additional and more varied content and is an increasing priority as more and more people turn towards this medium for their news and to express their views by comments and sharing. The council's Facebook page, for example, has seen an increase in the number of followers of more than 25% in the last year, due to the increased focus that is being directed towards this increasingly important channel. Similarly, the council's corporate Twitter feed has an increased number of followers and now has more than 12.2K followers with a growing level of engagement.
- Combined social media followers across Lancaster and Morecambe Bay destination channels (for Facebook and Twitter) has grown by 35% to 12,439 since April 2018 and subsequent reach has increased by 105% to 365,498 within the same period.
- Our total digital audience numbers across web and social media has grown 17% year on year. Our total digital monthly reach of 1.5million has also grown by 51% year on year.