

Executive Annual Report 2018/19

Councillor Blamire

Leader and Cabinet Member for Relationships with other Councils; Property; Democratic Services; Legal and HR

Executive Membership

- Cabinet (Chairman)
- Canal Quarter Cabinet Liaison Group
- Museums Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Corporate Property Review Cabinet Liaison Group
- Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee

Executive Appointments to Outside Bodies etc

- Lancashire Leaders Meeting
- Growth Lancashire (Substitute)

Overview of Portfolio Responsibilities

Relationships with other Councils; Property; Democratic Services; Legal and HR.

Progress made during 2018/19

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this report, either in writing it or in providing the services that are reflected here. Our workforce is our strength and their dedication is clear in my experience of them. It is a reflection of the feeling throughout that they are working for their own district and are proud to do so. The awards evening was a real pleasure to attend. Well organised, moving and great to see how much it was appreciated. Thank you all.

Relationships with Other Councils

Lancashire

The council continues to actively work with the other Lancashire authorities, as discussions continue on a formalised arrangement for Lancashire.

Councils in Lancashire are currently working together to progress a work programme of six themes:

- Economic Growth
- Skills, Education and Employment
- Housing
- Environment and Climate Change
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Safety

A Local Industrial Strategy for Lancashire is also proposed, with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership taking the lead on its development.

Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Region

The partnership with South Lakeland District Council and Barrow Borough Council around economic growth continues to develop, with a launch event planned for June 2019. The group is exploring common objectives around renewable energy, links to Universities and infrastructure potential.

Key Cities

The council recently joined the Key Cities group, along with other UK cities of a similar size in terms of population and economy. The group is a fast-growing city leadership network with a current membership of 26 cities, spanning the length and breadth of England and Wales with a collective population of 6.5 million people and a collective GDP of around £130bn.

The aim of the Key Cities network is to share knowledge and develop solutions to common problems, acting with a unified voice and alliance of shared interests. The group is gathering significant levels of influence, with increasing membership providing a powerful counterbalancing voice to the Core Cities group that has been the focus of government attention in recent years.

Property

During 2018/19 Implementation of the Property Group restructure was completed which, amongst other things, has increased capacity for strategic asset management and introduced a new hospitality team to capitalise on our events spaces. This realignment of resources will facilitate improvements in commercial focus, usage of our property assets, data management and income generation with ongoing examples including reviews of our corporate property strategy, corporate office accommodation and commercial property portfolio.

This year has seen significant investment at the City Museum with the completion of a major re-roofing project and a new boiler installation is anticipated in the next financial year. The Printroom café has entered its third year of trading at the Storey with business continuing to grow financially and develop in new directions. Throughout the 2018/19 financial year the occupation rate across the Council's non-operational commercial property portfolio has remained close to 100% representing a relatively stable position and a good level of occupancy overall.

With all urgent and high priority building repairs taken care of in recent years, it is important that complacency doesn't set in and we continue to provide adequate funding to keep on top of building maintenance. Planned maintenance is less expensive than reactive maintenance and provides the authority with better value for money and greater financial certainty moving forward. Therefore while we anticipate the cost of repairs to decrease in the years to come, it is important that we continue to invest in our buildings so that we don't run the risk of building up a maintenance backlog. A comprehensive and fully funded planned maintenance programme will provide the best value for money and to facilitate that a new round of condition surveys was completed in 2018/19 to identify essential repairs and maintenance over the next 5 years across the Council's property portfolio.

Democratic Services

Democratic Services have been heavily involved in the current review of the Council's Constitution this year, liaising with consultants Bevan Brittan and providing information and support to Members involved in the review group.

The Elections Team carried out another successful canvass in 2018. Unusually, there were no scheduled elections in May 2018, so the team took the opportunity to carry out a community governance review, a large scale piece of work which is carried out at least once every 10 years. Several issues were raised during the review and these were considered by Council.

Throughout the year, Democratic Support staff have supported Committees, Cabinet and Council meetings as usual. Support has been provided to the Overview and Scrutiny function, which is reported in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, elsewhere on the agenda. The Civic and Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer has organised and provided a full programme of Mayoral and Civic events, which are also detailed elsewhere on the agenda in the Mayor's annual report.

Legal Services

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

Legal Services continue to be involved with a variety of projects undertaken by officers in all services in the Council. This includes working with external legal lawyers to provide advice and assistance on major up and coming developments and project work. They have played key roles in procurement, contract drafting and negotiation as well as providing advice on strategy and risk as well as statutory compliance.

In supporting other services of the Council, Legal Services have again undertaken a number of successful prosecutions including health & safety, food hygiene, fly-tipping, waste offences and planning matters.

Anti-social behavior remains a hot topic, with Legal Services advising on policy, enforcement and undertaking advocacy on behalf of the Council at Court. This has included work on Anti-Social Behaviour injunctions, Committal applications and prosecutions under Community Protection Notices.

The day to day legal work incorporating debt collection, rating cases, recovery of rent arrears, council house sales and other property transactions, including sales and leases, has continued, as has the provision of a local land charges service.

Human Resources

Over the past 12 months, the HR Team have enabled substantial change to be delivered at all levels within the Council, including bringing into the Council a new team of Directors to help shape the future, as well as supporting other structural changes in support of the Council's ambitious plans for the future.

Other activity over the course of the year has delivered some excellent good-news stories and positive outcomes for staff and the Council, which include:

- A total of 11 apprenticeships have commenced, ensuring we are able to give new recruits an amazing start to their career journeys.
- Our new online recruitment service was launched, introducing a more efficient and modern applicant experience
- Over 600 of our staff have engaged in the rollout of our new Values, with much more work to follow during the 19/20 financial year, including embedding our values in core processes such as appraisal, recruitment and succession planning
- The 2nd 'Celebrating Success' event was held in October 2018, which saw a large number of staff recognised for their outstanding achievements during the year, supported by a large number of our Councillors
- Our 'Learning Zone' (our online training tool) is now fully rolled out, with various new learning resources available to all staff, and better reporting tools available for managers
- A Councillor specific section of the Learning Zone was developed and launched, to enable Councillors to undertake e-learning.
- Since the introduction of our new L & D focused role, we have been able to provide substantial L & D support to all our staff, and have facilitated the delivery of 76 training events for 1336 delegates across the council, including 24 managers completing the Institute of Leadership and Management Level 3 award, which focuses on improving performance
- Plans are now firmly in place to launch the new 'Lancaster Leadership Academy' which will be rolled out during the 19/20 year, and will provide our managers with the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills
- We have significantly improved accessibility to our online HR System, giving all non-networked staff the ability to manage aspects of their employment much more efficiently
- A number of positive community initiatives have been put in place for staff which include organised blood donation sessions, bra banks, work perks and other staff engagement activities
- In response to a staff survey a new range of staff benefits has been made available to Council staff, encompassing health and wellbeing and leisure benefits

- HR staff attended a range of careers events at schools and colleges to give guidance to young people in applying for jobs and to promote the Council as an employer of choice
- Work is well underway to review our job evaluation arrangements and reward structure, with outcomes planned for summer 2019.