



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Executive Annual Report 2006/07

May 2007

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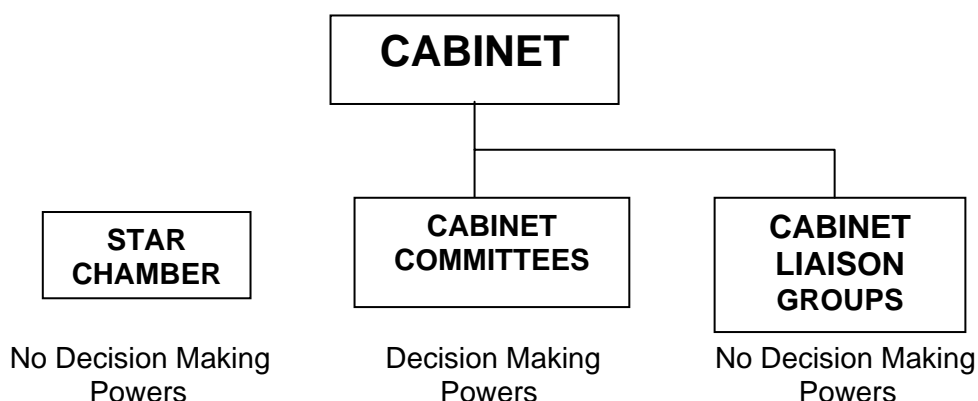
Decision Making Arrangements

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.

Up to 10 Executive Councillors each have an area of responsibility as set out below: -

Councillor	Portfolio
Ian Barker	Leader, Finance, Revenues Services (December 2006 – February 2007) and Human Resources.
Jon Barry	City Contract Services.
Eileen Blamire	Community Safety, Emergency Planning and Legal, Democratic Services (December 2006 – February 2007) and Licensing.
Abbott Bryning	Economic Development and Lancaster Regeneration.
Gina Dowding	Community Planning, Diversity and Sustainability Partnership.
Janice Hanson	Engineering, Property Services (December 2006 – February 2007) and Morecambe Regeneration.
Joyce Pritchard March 2006 – April 2006. John Gilbert May 2006 – February 2007.	Council Housing, Environmental Health, Strategic Housing and Information and Customer Services (December 2006 – February 2007)
Pat Quinton	Planning Policy and Rural Affairs.
Ron Sands	Arts and Events, Leisure, Museums and Tourism.
Alex Stone (March 2006 – November 2006)	Revenues Services, Democratic Services, Property Services and Information and Customer Services.

The following Cabinet structure was adopted by the City Council for dealing with matters within its delegated powers: -



CABINET COMMITTEES

Where the Cabinet is responsible for an Executive function, they may, with the exception of Key Decisions, collectively delegate further to an individual Cabinet Member, a Committee of Cabinet, an Area Committee, joint arrangements or an Officer, unless the Council directs otherwise.

Unless the Cabinet directs otherwise, a Committee of the Cabinet to whom functions have been delegated by the Cabinet may delegate further to an Officer.

Even where Executive functions have been delegated the fact does not prevent the discharge of these delegated functions by the Cabinet or Committee of the Cabinet who delegated, if appropriate.

There is only one Cabinet Committee at present and this is the Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee. The terms of reference for this Committee is to consider strategic issues regarding all Markets by the City Council, in particular issues raised as part of the Best Value Review of Assets and Facilities Action Plan.

CABINET LIAISON GROUPS

The purpose of these Groups is purely consultative and not decision making. They are generally chaired by a member of Cabinet and there is no restriction on size although the group must be limited to what is manageable and effective for their purpose. They may be time limited or of longer standing, again depending on their purpose.

This provides an opportunity for Cabinet Members and non executive Members working closer together for the greater good of the community, along with people from outside the Council.

STAR CHAMBER

The Star Chamber, which is an informal group of Members, is to assist Cabinet in bringing forward recommendations in respect of the Policy and Budget Framework. It is not a decision making body but will generate recommendations for decision takers. It meets every week and consists of a core membership of Cabinet Members and is supported by the Management Team and Head of Financial Services. It is not a formal body and is not subject to Access to Information rules.

AGENDA

From March 2006 until March 2007 109 Executive Decisions have been taken. Of these 54 were Key Decisions. 2 decisions were 'called-in' for further examination by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The table below shows the number of decisions each Member was consulted on: -

Portfolio Holder Area of Responsibility Councillor	CABINET, CABINET COMMITTEES AND URGENT BUSINESS DECISION PROCEDURE			
	KEY DECISION (KD) <i>up to 20/03/07</i>	NKD TAKEN BY CABINET <i>Up to 20/03/07</i>	INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION (ICMD) <i>up to 22/03/07</i>	URGENT BUSINESS DECISION (UBD) <i>up to 09/03/07</i>
Ian Barker	9	34	13	12
Jon Barry	5	5	2	2
Eileen Blamire	1	-	6	-
Abbott Bryning	4	-	-	-
Gina Dowding	1	1	-	-
John Gilbert	7	2	8	-
Janice Hanson	5	7	12	2
Joyce Pritchard	2	1	1	-
Pat Quinton	5	2	3	-
Ron Sands	5	-	6	-
Alex Stone	10	3	10	6

KEY:

Key Decisions	KD
Non Key Decisions	NKD
Decisions Called-In	DCI
Individual Cabinet Member Decision	ICMD
Urgent Business Decision	UBD

The above figures include decisions where a Member had been involved in the decision jointly with another Member or, in the case of urgent business, where the Member had been consulted by the Chief Executive.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR IAN BARKER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

1 INTRODUCTION



- 1.1 I am pleased to present my fourth report as Leader of the Council.
- 1.2 The Council has continued to make good progress during this year. We have just received drafts of the Annual Management Letter and of the Use of Resources judgement from the Audit Commission. These confirm the steady progress we are making. In many ways our performance is better than many councils with a higher CPA rating. For that reason we have asked to be recatergorised. The Audit Commission has accepted that there is a good chance our rating will improve and there will be a reinspection early in the new Council.
- 1.3 A major disappointment has been the decision not to allow our bid for unitary status to go forward to the next round. Unitary local government is fast becoming the norm in England; it is already universal in Wales and Scotland. The two tier system leads to inefficiencies, duplication, confusion and lack of accountability. The problem is not recognising that change is necessary, it is reaching agreement on the form of that change and overcoming the transitional problems.
- 1.4 I would like to record my thanks both to my Cabinet colleagues and to officers for the work they have done over the past four years. Some of the collegiality that I referred to last year in relation to Cabinet colleagues has been under some strain lately with the approach of the elections. However over the four years I feel we have worked together well. The Council is well served by its officers and I want to pay tribute to their professionalism.

2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP 2005/06

- Cabinet
- Access to Services Project Board
- Cleanliness Project Board
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group
- Morecambe Liaison Group

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc

- Governing Body – Lancaster and Morecambe College Corporation
- GONW Objective 2 & 3 Programme Management/Regional Committee [1]
- GONW Programme Management Group [2]
- Lancashire Leaders Meeting
- Lancaster Local Strategic Partnership
- LSP Health and Wellbeing Group

- North West Regional Assembly
- North West Regional European Partnership [3]
- Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board [4]
- Local Government Association Strategy and Finance Panel
- Lancaster Vision Board

[1] European Regional Development Programme

[2] European Regional Development Programme – shared with Councillor Val Stevens, Manchester City Council.

[3] NWRA appointment to represent the Lancashire sub-region

[4] Representing Lancashire districts.

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 LEADER OF CABINET

4.1.1 The responsibilities of Cabinet Members are:

Councillor	Portfolio
Barker	Leader, Finance and Human Resources
Barry	City Contract Services
Blamire	Community Safety, Emergency Planning and Legal and Licensing
Bryning	Economic Development and Lancaster Regeneration
Dowding	Community Planning, Diversity and Sustainability Partnership
Gilbert	Council Housing, Environmental Health and Strategic Housing
Hanson	Engineering and Morecambe Regeneration
Quinton	Planning Policy and Rural Affairs
Sands	Arts and Events, Leisure, Museums and Tourism
Stone	Administration, Information, Property and Revenues

4.1.2 Following the resignation of Councillor Stone from the Council, his duties were divided. Councillor Blamire to over responsibility for Democratic Services, Councillor Gilbert responsibility for Information and Customer Service, Councillor Hanson responsibility for Property Services and I took over responsibility for Revenues and Benefits.

4.1.3 Cabinet took a further step forward in public involvement in 2006/07. The previous year's exercise in consultation on the Cabinet Priorities was repeated using the citizen's panel that was assembled during the year. We had more responses which resulted in detailed changes. It was also agreed to open up the Cabinet meeting to questions from the public – though so far no one has taken any advantage of this.

4.1.4 The Council has taken a major step forward in performance management. We now have Performance Management Teams which look at all the indicators in the Council's Corporate Plan on a quarterly basis and take action if targets are not being met. These meetings involve Cabinet members, Corporate Directors and Service Heads. A Corporate PRT also meets and I report to the Budget and Performance Panel. I feel these teams have been successful in identifying issues and recommending action at an early stage.

4.2 FINANCE

4.2.1 The major aim of the finance portfolio is to deliver the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. This is to keep Council Tax rises below 4.9% while strengthening the Council's financial position and to have an affordable capital programme balanced over five years. At the same time a prudent view has to be taken of future years' commitments. This years Council Tax rise was 3.9%, in the urban core, including special expenses – the lowest for eight years.

4.2.2 However, as important was the fact that we were able to deliver some significant elements of growth. As well as the built-in growth for the final two phases of three stream recycling, there was also provision for adding a fourth stream of plastics recycling. There was growth to enable the council to deal with issues relating young peoples homelessness, air quality management, environmental issues and crime and disorder issues.

4.2.3 None of this would have been possible without the work of Star Chamber throughout the year in identifying savings. Increasingly the financial management of the Council itself is generating savings. This year the renewal of our insurances resulted in substantially reduced premiums thanks to the effort that Financial Services have put into dealing with claims. The savings have been ploughed back into service delivery.

4.2.4 On the capital side, there was some major growth. The programme provides for a major effort to put our buildings back into good order, to providing Customer Service Centres at both Town Halls and to an initiative on Climate Change. Clearly this can only be financed by capital receipts. However, Cabinet decided not to rely on land sales that might require changes to the planning framework and to ask officers to look at strategic disposals of buildings.

4.2.5 Financial Service performed well and achieved a good report from the auditors in terms of the accuracy of the accounts and in the draft Use of Resources judgement. There have been changes in the internal staffing structures and in accommodation during the year and staff have coped well with the changes. I would like to thank Nadine Muschamp and her staff for her assistance during the year.

4.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

- 4.3.1 HR has seen considerable changes during the year. There has been a reorganisation with Legal Services and Human Resources being merged.
- 4.3.2 The major task for HR during the year has been the implementation of the Fair Pay process. Job evaluation briefings and interviews have taken place in CC(D)S, Information and Customer Services, and Democratic Services and interviews are soon to commence in Legal Services. The timetable is for the interviews to be completed by August 2007, with a view to the implementation of a new pay and grading structure from the 1st April 2008. The evaluation process is extremely time consuming, and there is still considerable work to be done on the pay and grading structure.
- 4.3.3 The Service has worked hard to provide support to Services in order to reduce staff sickness absence. The improvement made in previous years has been maintained, but unfortunately has not been bettered. About two thirds of all sickness absence is long term sickness. The Service is supporting managers in carrying out difficult interviews with staff where there may be no realistic prospect of a return to work under the same conditions. A number of outstanding difficult cases have been dealt with this year and hopefully this will lead to improvements in next years figures.
- 4.3.4 A significant achievement has been the award of liP recognition to CC(D)S and it is hoped to build on this success to achieve recognition for the whole Council in 2007/08.
- 4.3.5 The Service has also advised on Service re-structures in CC(D)S and Cultural Services.

5 PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 A key task for the Finance portfolio holder will be to seek out further efficiencies that can be reinvested. We have only made very modest progress in sharing services with other Councils. This must be a key task for the future.
- 5.2 We are an improving Council. Both as a spur to further improvement and as a means of letting the public know what we have achieved, we must find a way of reporting to them simply on what has been achieved.

6 CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07

OUR PRIORITIES:

- 6.1 We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.
- 6.2 The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Finance	To adopt a new economic vision for the district
Human Resources	To meet the financial targets set within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and provide local people with cost effective services. To improve the Council To ensure that our staff feel that their contributions are valued

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Limit Council Tax increases to 5% or less in 2005/06 and 2006/07.
Develop Customer Contact Centres in both Morecambe and Lancaster. There will be a radical look at our buildings to make them both more efficient and more accessible to all our citizens. The standards of service that customers can expect will be published and the complaints system will be revised.
Continue to seek opportunities to work together with other local authorities or public bodies to achieve efficiency gains.
Establish what the priorities for the City Council are in its role in the provision of community development and work with young people

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JON BARRY, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CITY COUNCIL (DIRECT) SERVICES

1 INTRODUCTION



2 EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP 2006/07

- Cabinet
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group

3 EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc

- Waste Management Strategy Steering Group

4 OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

This portfolio covers everything carried out by City Council (Direct) Services, including:

- Street Cleansing
- Grounds Maintenance – parks, open spaces, trees, highways verges, roundabouts
- Highways sub-contracting work for the County Council in the urban core areas
- Public toilets
- Management and maintenance of the Council's vehicle fleet
- Waste management and recycling

On 30th June, street lighting moved to the County Council linked to their decision to end the Lancashire Highways Partnership.

5 ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006/07

5.1 Waste Management

- Kilograms of waste collected per head of population in 2005/6 (BV84a) top quartile nationally
- Recycling target set by DEFRA for 2005/6 (18%) exceeded- at this time 30,000 households had been provided with wheeled bins / boxes.

- 40,000 of households in District now have wheeled bins and boxes. Cabinet approved roll out to further 10,000 households in Sept 2007 and 7,000 households in Sept 2008. In addition plastics will be collected as a recyclable item from September 2007.
- Items of bulky waste now collected by partnership between Lancaster City Council / Furniture Matters called 'Bulky Matters'. Over 50% of all tonnage collected is reused or recycled. This innovative service has been recognised nationally as an example of best practice (eg lets recycle.com awards).
- Trade waste collection service to offer a recycling service to schools from April 2007.
- 80.8% (BV90a) of people are very or fairly satisfied with the waste collection service.
- 71.4% (BV90b- 81.86% when adjusted for deprivation indices) of people are very or fairly satisfied with the provision of local recycling facilities

5.2 Highways Maintenance

- Entered into contract with Lancashire County Engineering Services to deliver highways maintenance within the District.
- Achieved ISO 9001, OHSAS accreditation

5.3 Street Cleansing

- BV 199- percentage of relevant land with litter and detritus below an acceptable level improved from 28% in 2004/5 to 18% in 2005/6 and is set to improve further in 2006/7.
- Anti Litter Action Plan 'Putting Litter in Its Place' launched with a focus on Enforcement, Education and Service Delivery. Supported by a well publicised media campaign. So far in 2006/7-
- New Environment Enforcement Officer in post from August 2006. From Aug to Jan –
 - 130 investigations into cleanliness related complaints have taken place
 - Over 2,200 warning letters have been sent out
 - 893 people were spoken to raise awareness of the penalties for littering
 - Over 1200 portable ashtrays were handed out
 - 29 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued by Council staff and PCSOs for littering / dog fouling
 - 25 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued by the Police for littering
- Over 20 maintenance days have been carried out in hard to access streets
- CC(D)S has worked with agencies on the clean sweep initiative in partnership with other Council services Police, Fire and Rescue Service .
- Cleansing improvement officer has been in post since Jan 2007 to carry out a full review of cleansing operations.
- 4 PCSOs have been funded by the City Council to focus on environmental enforcement. These staff are now in post and will be jointly tasked by the Police and the Council's Environment Enforcement Officer. Additional PCSOs are also being funded by West End Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership.
- Additional beat sweepers have placed in hot-spot areas eg Skerton, Bowerham, Marsh, Ryelands (funded by using existing resources more efficiently).
- Between April and December this year 2662 incidents of fly tipping were recorded which is a 26% improvement on the same period during the previous year when

3612. By third quarter of this year 81% of all fly tipping incidents reported to the customer service centre were responded to within one working day.

5.4 Grounds Maintenance

- Strategy for playground improvement agreed and several playgrounds have already been improved- Peel Ave, The Cliffs, Glasson Dock, Palatine Rec, Yealand Redmayne, Benson Ave.
- Successful entries in Tatton Show
- Continued support of 'in Bloom' entries.
- Continued partnership with Piccadilly Garden Centre to provide training opportunities for people with special needs at the nursery.
- Worked with Job Centre + to provide work opportunities for 20 long term unemployed people during the summer months.
- Street trees are being re-planted as a result of the tree strategy.

5.5 Public Conveniences

- Public convenience improvement programme agreed. New facilities now in place at Clock Tower and Arndale Car park. In 2007/8 plans for Happy Mount Park and Heysham Village.

5.6 Building Cleaning

- 90% of all building cleaning staff have been accredited with a national vocational qualification

5.7 Overall

- Audit Commission inspection rated waste management and cleansing - fair, one star that has promising prospects for improvement.
- CC(D)S recognised as an Investors in People employer
- Complete restructure of service has now taken place to better align service delivery with corporate priorities.

6 CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
City (Direct) Council Services	To improve the cleanliness of our streets

To reduce waste in the district by recycling and re-using

To reduce anti-social behaviour in the District such as littering, nuisance or rowdy behaviour, criminal damage and vandalism

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES	
Build on the improvements in CC(D)S by:	
(a)	agreeing a financially sustainable Highways Partnership with the County Council
(b)	successfully integrating BMS with Council Housing and realise savings
(c)	implementing the pilot call centre at CC(D)S
Improve street cleanliness by:	
(a)	implementing the initiatives in the Litter Strategy
(b)	finding ways of tackling grot spots
(c)	linking this into Community Safety initiatives if possible
Roll out further phases of the recycling and waste management programme.	
Look at new ways of providing toilets and at the same time reducing our costs.	

7 CONCLUSION:

The things I have spent most of my time on this year are toilets and street cleansing. I am pleased that the two new toilets in Morecambe are finally in place though I've yet to try them out.

At the start of the year I organised a 'street cleaning day' where cabinet members held meetings with street cleaners, middle managers and top managers. One useful thing to come from this was a visit to Exeter by Mark Davies and Peter Loker to see how they manage things. As a result, we have employed a worker for a year to look thoroughly at all of the cleansing schedules with a view to presenting a major report to cabinet and also to giving the public much more information on schedules and cleansing operations. The other useful thing was the employment of a 'man with a van' who has been successful in greatly increasing the speed with which fly-tipping is dealt with.

I do genuinely think that street cleansing in some areas has improved over the last year. In my view a major reason for this is the introduction of 'brush and barrow' persons in some residential areas. These are greatly valued by the public and seem to have done a good job.

In the future, we need to continue to improve our own operations but we should also look at land owned by other organisations and put in processes to make sure this is kept clean. Maybe a job for my successor or maybe a job for me?

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY, EMERGENCY PLANNING, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (December 2006 – February 2007), LEGAL AND LICENSING

INTRODUCTION



The Partnership was set a demanding target to reduce crime by 16% – 19%. For some months it was not on track to meet the target. However, the past quarter and the first weeks of this quarter has shown the Partnership as now being on track to meet targets and has been praised by Government Office North West.

Progress is being made on initiatives which are outlined below.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Community Legal Services Partnership
- Community Safety Strategy Group
- Community Safety Strategy Group, Executive Member
- Community Safety Strategy Group, Lancaster Action Group
- Lancashire Police Authority Partnerships Forum

PARTNERSHIPS:

Community Safety Partnership

Government has placed upon the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) a stringent target to reduce crime by 16-19%. The key areas for the Lancaster District are alcohol relating violent crime and criminal damage. The Partnership was not on track to meet this target for the earlier part of the year. However, in the third and last quarter the Partnership is seen as having a “good” chance of meeting the target.¹

The Partnership has worked within a changing landscape over the past year. The Community Safety Strategy 2005 to 2008 has been overtaken by the Lancashire wide Local Area Agreement (LAAS) Safer and Stronger Communities Funding Agreement (SSCF). The LAA/SSCF has a number of targets and decisions need to be made on prioritisation.

At present the Partnership is benefiting from consultancy provided by Government Office North West. The aim of which is to consider governance, structures, and

¹ Government Office North West Tracker Tool

performance management. A report with recommendations will be produced from this consultancy.

Working Groups have been set up to deal with alcohol related violent crime and criminal damage and close links have been formed with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Alcohol Harm Group. Multi agency meetings are taking place to run Clean Sweeps in key areas within the district.²

A Multi Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) team will shortly be based in offices on Caton Road. It is intended that the team will eventually reside in the Police Station. The team will comprise, on a full time basis, the Community Safety Officer and Assistant as well as the Police Partnership Officer and Crime Prevention Team. Other agencies will also be working in the MAPS team on a part time basis such as the Environmental Co-ordinator, Youth Offending Team and Youth and Community Workers and an officer from Victim Support.

A spending plan is currently being drafted by officers which will go to the Partnership for agreement and the Council for endorsement. The Partnership's available spend has reduced this year as 15% of SSCF funding is to be disseminated at County level.

This year the CSP will have spent just over £380,000. Key projects have been: PCSOs, the development of a (Multi Agency Problem Solving) MAPS team, analytical work to develop partnership understanding of key problems, domestic violence projects such as SAL's Place and LDWA and substance misuse projects such as XS, Tower and the Arrest Referral Scheme.

The PCSOs have been coming on stream throughout this financial year. It is envisaged that from the next financial year there will be 20 PCSOs in place. These are part funded from Government via the Police and part funded as follows:

- 4 x City Council (these four PCSOs are focusing on the cleaner, safer, greener agenda);
- 6 x West End Partnership;
- 10 x Community Safety Partnership.

City Council Officers continue to work on a Litter Strategy which involves a press campaign to raise awareness of the requirements of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act, i.e. that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) can be issued for littering (cigarettes and chewing gums).

An audit of activity around Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act has been carried out with Service Heads. The results of this audit have been integrated into service business plans and growth bids have been put to Star Chamber. The growth bids, which have gone to Star Chamber, include funding for a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and Training and Education Pack.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy is due to be launched on 30th March 2007. The Domestic Abuse Executive Group is already using the action plan to manage work around domestic abuse.

Work is taking place around prolific and other priority offenders and an action plan is being developed to improve methods of working.

² Clean Sweeps – 5 week programmes targeted at key areas including: cleaning, enforcement and public reassurance.

The district benefited from extra street lighting of nearly £29,000 due to a successful bid from the CSP.

Work is taking place around the Neighbourhood Policing agenda. Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings are taking place.

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity are now statutory responsibilities for the Council under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Council created a new post of Civil Contingencies Officer as part of Health and Strategic Housing, to fulfil these responsibilities. The new officer started work on 1st November 2006 and this report covers the areas of progress in both disciplines.

Emergency Planning: The Council's District Emergency Plan has undergone some minor revisions to reflect recent changes although a full revision is also being undertaken. Other plans in the course of preparation include one for flooding and severe weather and another for pandemic influenza.

The District Emergency Control Centre, previously at the Cable Street offices, has now been moved to the Democratic Services suite at Lancaster Town Hall and work has been ongoing to ensure this area is properly equipped to function as an Emergency Control Centre if activated.

The Council plays a full part as a member of the Lancashire Resilience Forum. This organisation coordinates the multi-agency emergency plans, exercises and training for all the services in Lancashire. Our membership ensures that, although the Council has its own responsibilities, it can work with and draw on the support of many other agencies in both the preparation for and the response to emergencies and major incidents. Exercises planned for 2007/08 include a Rest Centre exercise in November 2007 and a nuclear exercise at Heysham in February 2008.

Business Continuity: The Council's responsibility here is in two areas. The first is a requirement to have plans to maintain critical services in the event of either a major incident elsewhere affecting the Council or an internal incident. All Council Services are currently working on Business Continuity plans for their respective areas of responsibility. They are supported in this by a Business Continuity Team comprising representatives from Property Services, Financial Services, IS and Customer Services, HR and others. A maintenance programme will be put in place and during 2007/08 it is intended that the completed plans will be tested. Some of the Service Plans are of very high quality and the Civil Contingencies Officer is coordinating their submission and sharing Best Practice among the Services.

The second area of responsibility is in the promotion of Business Continuity to the wider community including businesses and voluntary agencies. Links have been established with the Chamber of Commerce with a view to planning joint events and the Civil Contingencies Officer has written a series of Business Continuity items for the Chamber's magazine. Local organisations are now beginning to request assistance and advice has so far been given to, amongst others, Beaumont College and a local Housing Association.

Legal and Licensing

With effect from 1st April 2006, there has been a combined Legal and Human Resources Service under one Service Head. The former Senior Solicitor was appointed Legal Services Manager and the legal team was further strengthened by the appointment of a new Senior Solicitor. Each Service of the Council now has a nominated solicitor to act as the first point of contact for legal enquiries and it is hoped that this will help to improve the service provided. In December 2006 the Legal staff relocated to Palatine Hall and now work in the same office as Licensing. This makes for a more cohesive service and enables legal advice on licensing matters to be readily given.

The Legal team has continued to advise on major projects including Luneside East and the Canal Corridor as well as providing legal advice on prosecutions for environmental, planning and housing benefit matters and on debt recovery, Council Housing issues and other property transactions.

This year has seen the appointment of a joint Licensing Manager with South Lakeland District Council. The arrangement started in September and it has inevitably taken some time to adapt to the new arrangement. However there are undoubted advantages in being able to share policies and procedures and to be able to draw on the experiences of another Council. The Licensing Manager has recently developed a Multi-Agency Licensing Team involving the Police, Environmental Health and other public authorities and it is hoped that this team will be proactive in dealing at an early stage with any enforcement problems under the Licensing Act 2003, particularly as a vacant Licensing Enforcement Officer post has recently been filled. This has been the first full year of the new Licensing Act regime and the new arrangements seem to be working well and there have been considerably fewer hearings than during the transitional implementation period. The collection of annual fees has been more successful than had been anticipated.

The Council has approved its policy under the Gambling Act 2005 and the first applications under that Act will be received by the Council from May 2007. This will be the next challenge for the Licensing Section.

The Land Charges section continues to provide a speedy service, carrying out almost 99% of standard searches within five working days.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
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SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Community Safety	To help residents to feel safe in their community
Emergency Planning	To reduce all crime in the District – with a particular focus on criminal damage and alcohol related crime
Legal and Licensing	To reduce anti-social behaviour in the District such as littering, nuisance or rowdy behaviour, criminal damage and vandalism To ensure that our staff feel that their contributions are valued

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Review the environmental warden and PCSO schemes in conjunction with the police with a view to ensuring that they are financially sustainable and that powers are unified where possible.
Use the licensing policy, when adopted, and planning powers to improve community safety.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR ABBOTT BRYNING, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LANCASTER REGENERATION

INTRODUCTION



EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Lancaster University and St. Martin's College Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancashire Economic Partnership Forum
- Lancaster Regeneration Partnership
- LSP Regeneration Building Block
- North and West Lancs Priority 1 Action Plan Partnership Board
- Storey Centre for Creative Industries
- Groundwork Trust, Lancashire West

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Achievements in 2006/07

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cabinet Portfolio – Economic Development /Regeneration

Regeneration projects for the district have been principally dependent upon external capital funds sourced by intensive and successful bidding to Government, European, SRB, NWDA, national lotteries and specialist agencies, together with City contributions when available.

THE WORK RECORD INCLUDES :

Lancaster and Morecambe Economic Development Zone

The Lancaster & Morecambe Economic Development Zone (EDZ) is the largest externally funded regeneration programme ever undertaken by the City Council. The

past year has seen some major achievements and all its key projects have now been secured. This means that the City Council will be able to draw down the full £8 million of European funding available to the EDZ by the end of 2008. Details of individual projects follow.

Luneside East

This is the EDZ's "flagship" project. Following a successful outcome to the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) inquiry, the Council has been able to take possession of the whole site. Works have also been commissioned from National Grid/Transco to remove the most visible development constraint from the site, the gasholder, and led to its demolition in December 2006. The Council's chosen private sector development partner, CTP, is now preparing a full detailed planning application and intends to commence remediation work this summer.

Economic development staff have also been working throughout the year to assist businesses affected by the Luneside East scheme to find alternative premises. Although this has been handicapped by the general shortage of industrial and commercial property which the EDZ is trying to address, several of the businesses have now successfully relocated.

This emerging Luneside East urban village project will replace contaminated and derelict land with a mixed development of 300+ housing units; 80,000 sq ft of modern office space, parkland and leisure facilities. There will be better links through Quay Meadow into the city centre.

4/5 Dalton Square managed offices (CityLab)

The new CityLab offices were officially opened in August 2006 and have created an impressive, state of the art office development in the heart of the city. The £2.7 million scheme also makes an important contribution to the townscape of the Dalton Square Conservation Area with a sensitively designed, contemporary building that reflects the heritage of its surroundings. The building is proving popular and is 39% let after 6 months, which is on course to meet its business plan projection for the equivalent of at least a break even position in the first year. The first tenants are five businesses that have all expanded/relocated from within the city.

Port of Heysham industrial access

This £560,000 capital project was completed in 2006, opening up nearly 10 acres of serviced industrial land at the Port. Two phases of marketing have now been completed and terms have been agreed for sale of the entire site in seven separate plots. The purchasers are mostly local businesses and are expected to support 100 existing jobs and create a further 190 jobs by the end of 2008.

LOOKING FORWARD - AN OVERVIEW :

Storey Institute Centre for Creative Industries

This project took a major step forward in October 2006 when its funding package was finalised. The £3.5 million scheme will receive funding from City Council, Arts Council, ERDF, and Single Regeneration Budget, and will refurbish this much loved Victorian building to create a Centre for Creative Industries. It will provide creative industry workspace as well as public galleries, a new auditorium/conference centre, a

bar/café, and a new state of the art Tourist Information Centre. Works are expected to commence on site in spring 2007. Converting this underused Grade 11 listed building helps provide a heritage gateway and increased "footfall" for the Castle Precinct.

Lune Business Park

Officers have also been working closely with the new owners of the Lune Industrial Estate (now Lune Business Park) to support plans for upgrading of the estate and provision of improved workspace. An ERDF project has now been submitted and approved under the EDZ programme which will support phased improvements and new workspace over the period to late 2008.

Lancaster and Morecambe Vision Board

The Vision Board has produced its economic vision for the District and, after publication and consultation, it has been adopted by the Council as the broad framework for its regeneration and economic development work in the future.

A broad and ambitious funding bid has been submitted by the Vision Board to NWDA, and has led to an allocation of funding from NWDA for 2007/08 onwards. This will be followed up through the work of 5 steering groups which will be developing future activity and projects under the following thematic headings:

- Transport
- Sustainable energy and recycling
- Business and knowledge
- Employability & Skills
- Culture and pride

Lancaster Science Park

One of the key projects supported by the Vision Board is the development of a new science park at Bailrigg, adjacent to Lancaster University. The City Council is working jointly with NWDA and Lancaster University on this major strategic project and significant progress has been made during 2006/07. A market demand study has been completed, outline planning permission is being sought, and NWDA have released funding for site acquisition and detailed design. The site is now being purchased by the City Council, subject to the outcome of the outline planning application. Further detailed design and development work will continue during 2007, leading to a final funding application to NWDA which will lead to a start on construction of access roads and an Innovation Centre during 2008. The Science Park is designated as one of the North West's Regional Strategic Sites where technological spin-out from academic research should provide an internationally significant contribution to our local economy involving knowledge transfer and value added products.

Canal Corridor

Proposals for a retail led regeneration of the Canal Corridor North area have progressed during the last year. The Council entered into a formal development agreement with potential developers Centros Miller in the summer of 2006, which is

dependent upon a number of issues, the most important of which is the granting of a satisfactory planning permission.

As Local Planning Authority, the Council has been engaged in formal "without prejudice" pre-application discussions with Centros Miller. The purpose of this exercise, which has been endorsed by Government as good practice, is to ensure that Centros Miller are aware of, and address fully, the key issues likely to arise during consideration of the planning application(s). This will include the need for the scale of retailing proposed, the possible impact of the scheme on Lancaster and Morecambe centres, traffic and transport and the implications for the area's cultural and historic assets. Significant progress has been made by Centros Miller during the year in addressing these issues and it is anticipated that applications for planning permission and other necessary consents will be submitted late March/early April 2007.

This radical development of the Canal Corridor (North) area, so blighted for over 20 years, will enhance the townscape with a sympathetically designed mixed retail, cultural/leisure and public space provision combined with community facilities and housing. It is a public/private partnership initiative between the city and Centros Miller.

PUTTING THE DISTRICT IN THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE – OTHER ACTIVITY :

Our district lies outside of the Central Lancashire City Region and Northern Way boundaries and is separate from economic developments specific to Cumbria. Lancaster is located in the Lancashire Economic Sub-Region and the Lancashire Economic Strategy and Action Plan has been submitted by the Lancashire Economic Partnership Board to the North West Regional Development Agency for approval in March 2007. The LEP Board consists mainly of Lancashire Chief Executive Officers. Councillor Bryning attends the Lancashire Economic Forum of elected members and stakeholders.

Councillor Barker represents the Sub-Region on the important Operational Programme Steering Committee for the Region which Anne Marie Harrison also attends as an observer. She recently outlined for Cabinet the transitional 2007/08 European Regional Development Fund Programme insofar as it will affect our area.

The LEP Board has received a presentation on "Developing the Visitor Economy Strategy 2006/16" by Mike Wilkinson, Chief Executive Officer of the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board. He stressed that the Sub-Region should be viewed as a "visitor economy" rather than as a "tourism economy" since, at a £12 billion spend, it represents 22% of the whole regional total. There are specific references, for example in the Board's own Strategy to Lancaster as an historic city and to green tourism in Bowland as well as the resurgence of Morecambe as a resort.

These are a few issues randomly selected but related to economic development and regeneration in the Lancashire Sub-Regional Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2006, endorsed in July 2006 (www.lancashire-ep.org.uk).

To be meaningful, the Lancaster District of City, Coast and Countryside will emerge as a city of style, ambition, opportunity and social cohesion fit for the 21st century. A key factor in this process will be a sustainable, developing economy.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members of the Economic Development Service and Directorate for their help, support and enthusiasm for advancing the Corporate Plan Priorities relating to economic development and regeneration during a very busy and productive year.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Economic Development and Lancaster Regeneration	Ensure that Regeneration Strategy, Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Lancaster.
	Continue to progress the EDZ and, in particular, Luneside East. Promote a canal corridor plan that fits in with the Local Plan. Promote the Bailrigg Strategic Site.
	Member oversight of the Economic Development Service.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Ensure that Regeneration Strategy, Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Lancaster.
Continue to progress the EDZ and, in particular, Luneside East. Promote a canal corridor plan that fits in with the Local Plan. Promote the Bailrigg Strategic Site.
Member oversight of the Economic Development Service.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR GINA DOWDING, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING, DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY, AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHAMPION



EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group
- Diversity Cabinet Liaison Group
- Equality and Diversity Building Block
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee
- Local Strategic Partnership Executive Group (Chairman)
- Mellishaw Park Cabinet Liaison Group
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES Etc:

- Lancaster Local Strategic Partnership
- LSP Equality and Diversity Building Block
- LSP Sustainability Partnership
- Morecambe Bay Tobacco Control Alliance

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

Much of the work I am reporting on is a result of the work of partnerships with other agencies and I would like to acknowledge the commitment given by individuals in other organisations to this work.

My special areas of responsibility on the Cabinet cover consultation, community planning, sustainability, diversity and young people's champion. The following is a summary of key events and outputs in the last year in these areas.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

1. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

(a) Summary of executive functions

The LSP executive has continued this year to take a strategic overview of the delivery of the community strategy and the implementation of the Local Area Agreement for the Lancaster district. **All of the delivery of this work is delegated to the agencies that are members of the LSP's seven building blocks.**

Along with the existing Building Blocks (Children & Young People, Equality & Diversity, Life Long Learning, Health & Well Being, Sustainability, Community Safety), the LSP has now adopted the Economic Development Partnership as its seventh Building Block. This Building Block is made up of the Vision Board and other partnerships which exist to achieve the economic prosperity of the Lancaster District.

The Lancashire Local Area Agreement (LAA), introduced in 2005, describes a joint agreement between central and local government to deliver agreed national and local priorities over a three-year period. During this past year all District Councils, the County Council, local and County Strategic Partnerships have been working with other strategic public sector agencies with the aim of delivering the targets laid out in the LAA alongside the local district targets which have been agreed by the LSP.

The White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' published in October 2006 year signals fundamentally different arrangements for LAAs, LSPs and their relationship with local authorities and we will all need to take account of future guidance and legislation in this area.

(b) LSP Second Home Funding

During this past year both Lancashire County Council and Lancaster City Council allocated the £298,481 of extra income they received from increased Council Tax on second homes to the LSP. The LSP's Building Blocks identified their key priorities to enable delivery of the Community Strategy. Grants were made to partners and organisations to help deliver those priorities:

- Promoting Community Cohesion
- Promoting financial inclusion
- Creating market for plastic recycling
- Renewable energy
- Homelessness prevention
- Young people's counselling support
- Accident prevention – particularly accidents in the home among the elderly
- Alcohol related harm reduction
- Antisocial behaviour reduction
- The Community Learning Network
- Building community capacity (an LSP executive priority)

In addition 20 small grants were awarded (up to £2,000) to enable partnership work and community / voluntary sector engagement in the district and the following examples highlight some of the wide range of projects.

- Allotment planning
- Hurdy Gurdy Festival, Food & Nutrition Project
- Citizenship in Schools
- Morecambe pubwatch
- Chinese Sunday School
- Lancaster Pride
- Access to Arts

(c) Review of structures, membership and processes

In the coming weeks, the LSP is planning a Peer Review of the Partnership in order to provide an objective and managed external challenge to determining how the LSP is making progress in establishing itself as a 'partnership of partnerships' and in delivering the objectives set out in the Community Strategy. This work will build upon the dialogue last year between the LSP and Council (and its Overview and Scrutiny Committee). Key messages emerged from those discussions about the need for better reporting and communications between the LSP and the City Council and whether the existing structures and protocols of the LSP and its thematic groups still remain "fit for purpose". The White Paper has much to say about these issues. The outcome of the Peer Review will, I hope, produce a strong and forward looking improvement plan for the LSP.

(d) Sustainable Community Strategy

When the first 'Life in the Lancaster District' Community Strategy was published in 2003, it was always intended that a review should take place after 3 years. Since 2003, changes have occurred in the wider policy context that mean that the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) now needs to ensure that this review takes into account the requirements of the 2006 Local Government White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' , to 're-shape' the Community Strategy into a Sustainable Community Strategy and many other important areas of policy such as neighbourhood management, Multi-Area Agreements, our Local Development Framework, Children's Trusts and climate change.

The LSP will therefore, during 2007, be overseeing the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy with the aim of producing and publishing a 'fit for purpose' Strategy by December 2007.

2. SUSTAINABILITY

(a) Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group

The Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group was set up in August 2006 to progress the Key Performance Indicators relating to Climate Change issues as set out in the City Council's Corporate Plan. In January of this year the Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group reported progress on its work to date to Cabinet. The group has now met five times and currently meets on a monthly basis.

In addition to the commitments within the Corporate Plan, the Council has signed the Nottingham Declaration and the Northwest Climate Change Charter.

Council, in setting its budget for 2007/08 has agreed to establish a new post within the Corporate Strategy Service to support development of this work and will focus on the development and delivery of a 'practical' Climate Change Strategy. This will include three main strands: protecting local communities, communicating climate change and a carbon reduction action plan for both council and district

(b) Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership – Steering Group

This year (2006/07) the partnership has overseen the delivery of LSP second homes funding bids from the Energy Forum and the Recycling Forum for supporting an Energy Shop for Lancaster and a plastic barrel recycling project. The partnership has also delivered:

Consultation responses: Lancaster and Morecambe Vision (*Vision Board*), Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report objectives and indicators (*Lancaster City Council*), 'Rising to the Challenge' Climate Change Strategy (*NWDA*), British Energy Authorisations Review Consultation (*Environment Agency, on behalf of the nuclear industry*), 'Eat Local' Action Plan (*Food Forum*).

Position statements: The sustainability partnership is developing position statements on topical local issues e.g. Sustainable energy and the future of nuclear power in Lancaster and Morecambe.

Media coverage of sustainability issues: Members of the Sustainability Partnership have contributed 15 articles on sustainable lifestyles as part of a regular 'Do Your Bit' column in the Morecambe Visitor. Six articles on sustainable food issues written by members of the partnership appeared on the Lancaster Guardian's website, and also appear on the 'Environment Campaigns' page of the Council's website.

(c) The Energy Forum

The Lancaster Energy Store project development has enabled the employment of a Sustainable Buildings Store Manager who was employed to investigate the feasibility of setting up a self-financing one-stop-shop for energy efficiency and renewable energy advice, information, installation and financing services.

The study has shown that by supporting two separate types of entity – a grant-funded independent Advice Centre (to develop the market and enable residents to access grant funding for energy efficiency measures), and a private sector organisation (providing the installation services), this project could become financially viable. One of the key findings of the development work is the need to provide free, independent advice face-to-face, as well as enabling home visits and home energy audits. Addressing this local need forms part of the recent bid to the LSP. The Energy Forum is now holding a series of open meetings to encourage wider community participation and networking.

(d) The Food Forum

The Food Forum sub-group of the Sustainability Partnership was established as an outcome of the 'Eat Local' LSP funded event.

The 'Eat Local Action Plan' involved the development, consultation and adoption of a local food plan that aims to reduce food miles and carbon footprint of the food we eat. This is one of the Sustainability Partnership's current priorities that have been incorporated into a bid for LSP support.

The Forum has published one local food feature in the Lancaster Guardian and published six features on their website.

(e) The Recycling Forum

The Forum oversees the delivery of The Rainwater Harvest Project - a new recycling converting waste industrial barrels (plastic) into water butts for allotments. Outcomes include water saving, recycling, training and supporting local voluntary organisations (a recycling social enterprise in Morecambe and the Allotment Associations).

The Recycling Directory has also been published. The web based recycling directory has approximately 7,500 hits a year making it in the top 20 most popular pages of the Lancaster City Council website.

The Waste Reduction Postcard Project was sent to all households in the district to promote the Recycling Forum's website, recycling directory and the Mailing Preference Service (MPS). Following its delivery, over 6,500 people in the district have signed up with MPS to reduce unsolicited (junk) mail - a 76% increase in registrations. This waste reduction project was funded by the LSP.

The Forum also undertook a Business Waste Recycling survey that was used to identify waste types produced by local businesses and their attitudes to recycling. The survey has been carried out with a view to Lancaster City Council offering a recycling (trade waste) service.

(f) The Wildlife Forum

The Rockpools and Cockles family event took place this year to raise awareness of the local marine environment and local food and attracted over 500 people. A Wildlife Forum open evening also took place and explored some of the problems associated with invasive non-native species and ways of taking action.

In Middleton Woods, the Phase 1 Habitat survey and desk top study have been commissioned with a view to designating part of the site as a local nature reserve. There has also been much work undertaken to raise the profile of important wildlife issues at the site to ensure a co-ordinated approach to any development on site.

The Wildlife Forum is encouraging local conservation groups to become affiliated to BTCV and take advantage of their insurance scheme that covers working with volunteers. As a result, Lancaster Seedsavers has taken this up and is now running a Conservation skills training project in the district.

(g) The Sustainable Transport Forum

The end of the Highways Partnership between the City and County Council meant that administrative support for co-ordinating the forum was withdrawn this year. The Sustainable Transport Forum has merged with the City Council's Cycling and Walking Forum, and this is in the process of merging

with the newly formed Cabinet Transport Liaison Group - four spaces on this group have been allocated to the Sustainable Transport Forum.

(h) Green Partnership Awards (GPA) scheme

This is the 10th Anniversary of the Green Partnership Awards (GPA) project that empowers local people to take part in environmental improvements. At this year's 'Celebration of Achievements' event, a 'Sustainability Award' is being presented to the most sustainable project in each district. The project nominated for the Lancaster district is Ryelands Primary School for its environmental improvements to the school grounds including an orchard, vegetable growing beds and a marsh.

Lancaster City Council together with its three partners, the County Council, United Utilities and the Environment Agency provide funding.

(i) Allotments

An assessment of need and study of potential management structures for the allotments has been commissioned by ALMA (Association of Lancaster and Morecambe Allotments). This work is being funded by the LSP and City Council's Allotment Reserve.

3. DIVERSITY

(a) Council progress towards equality standards

During the last twelve months there have been number of achievements in the area of Equality and Diversity. An Equalities Officer Working Group has been established to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to equality and diversity is implemented across the Council. The representatives on this group are responsible for ensuring equality objectives are implemented within their Service.

A Disability Equality Scheme has been drafted and a period of consultation has taken place. A draft Gender Equality Scheme and draft Comprehensive Equality Policy have also been produced and are due to be put out for consultation in the next two months.

Quarterly Performance Review meetings have taken place to monitor how Officers are progressing against agreed Equalities objectives. It was agreed through this process that the target date of achieving Level 2 in the Equality standard should be November 2007.

(b) Equality and Diversity Building Block

The first meeting of the Equality and Diversity Building Block took place on 13th June 2005 and the Building Block was formally adopted by the LSP on 22nd June 06. Over the past year or so the Building Block has achieved the following:

- Defined its purpose; agreed a definition of community cohesion; characteristics of a cohesive community and adopted a set of strategic aims.
- Consulted with the following groups: lesbian, gay and bisexual people;

people with disabilities, and Travellers and Gypsies, the Asian community, the Chinese community and the Polish community in order to hear what key issues groups are facing and to identify key points for future action by EDBB and partner organisations.

- Begun a process of linking some of the issues emerging from the above into other building blocks and into other organisations e.g. translation, lack of library books for minority groups, countering misinformation about immigration.
- Responded to three national consultations and one local consultation: Forced Marriages; Definition of Disability, the Commission for Integration and Cohesion, and Lancaster District Vision Board.
- Oversaw the submission of two bids within the last round: Promoting Community Cohesion and Financial Inclusion. Community cohesion continues to be a priority for the EDBB in the forthcoming year.
- Assisted with the development of a new network of community representatives addressing community cohesion that will eventually sit under the umbrella of the EDBB.
- Attended a variety of events and/or festivals including Chinese Mooncake Festival, Chinese New Year; Diwali, Diversity Week at Lancaster Prison; Interfaith Launch; Launch of the Police's Diversity Strategy; Lancaster Pride.
- Reviewed, re-established and publicised the Racism Hotline.

4. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The past year has seen the transfer of the Children and Young People Section from Cultural Services to Corporate Strategy. This move recognises the growing importance of the Children and Young People agenda within Central and Local Government and the Council's commitment to improving outcomes for the children and young people of the district.

Under the Children Act 2004 all district councils have "the duty to co-operate with their children's services authority to safeguard and promote the well-being of children". This means that arrangements need to be in place to ensure that the council fulfils its obligations under Safeguarding guidance – Section 11. During the past 12 months 13 sessions of Child Protection training have been held with over 125 staff attending. The management team and service heads have attended Child Protection training and a session for members was also held in September.

An Action Plan has been developed following these sessions and agreed by Management Team and the Children and Young People Manager is leading a co-ordinated cross –service approach to the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people.

In terms of taking forward the Every Child Matters Agenda for Change, key members and officers have met to discuss the setting up of a Cabinet Liaison group for Children and Young people and a cross-service working group. This builds on the work from the Young People Task Group in January 2006. Emphasis will be placed on the engagement and participation of children and young people in the planning of council services through Youth Focus Groups and the topic for the first of these groups will be the consultation on the Play Strategy.

Throughout the past 12 months the district has continued to work with the County Council on key elements of the Every Child Matters agenda. The Audit Commission has produced a Performance Action Plan for the County and District Council, "Working in Partnership to Deliver Improved Outcomes for Children and Young People". A seminar on this topic was held in Chorley for all the districts within Lancashire.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Media

Council generated publicity achieved an equivalent advertising rate, in the local papers alone, of almost £0.25m. Staff responded to 1,400 media enquiries, issued 421 press releases and negated dozens of potentially negative press articles. The annual media survey demonstrates again that the city council press office is rated more highly than any other public sector press office in the district and media satisfaction with the quality of council news and response rates is high. The team's media work was also shortlisted for a LGA Reputation Award.

(b) Campaigns

The last year has seen the Communications Team work closely with City Contract (Direct) Services and Environmental Health on the Putting Litter in its Place Campaign. Notable successes have included:

- Being one of just a handful of councils to be selected by DEFRA to be part of its anti gum campaign, which provided thousands of pounds in free advertising. We measured the incidence of gum dropped at 10 key sites across the district before and after the advertising and figures show the incidence of gum dropped by 35%
- The focus on cigarette litter saw almost 7,000 portable ashtrays given away
- Organising an Enforcement Week which saw officers speak people about the consequences of dropping litter
- We have just launched a competition to raise awareness in schools
- Tens of thousands of pounds worth of free publicity

CCDS have also secured £9,000 from Lancashire County Council to support the Local Area Agreement objective of improving performance for the year ahead to help the campaign continue.

The smoking ban promotion will also focus on the anti litter message and the public survey, conducted at the beginning of the campaign, will be repeated this year to measure any shift in the public's attitude around litter.

(c) Council Magazine

Three issues were produced this year and once again feedback has been positive. A survey, asking readers for their views about YOUR District Council MATTERS was included in the February issue. Responses are still coming in but so far there have been more than 200. Analysis of 154 responses inputted today show:

- 87% rate the magazine as good or excellent, a further 9.1% as Fair
- 94.2% believe it is value for money

The magazine was also one of four council magazines nationally to be shortlisted by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Local Government Awards.

(d) Externally funded project work

The team continues to provide a range of Public Relations and marketing support to projects receiving external funding. The money paid to the team for this work supports the team's income generation budget of £25,000, required to support the costs of one of the Communications Officer posts. Projects supported this year include:

Cycling Demonstration Town (CDT)
 Economic Development Zone
 Luneside East
 Storey Institute
 50 Forward
 Sustainability Partnership

The Council's successful marketing of this the CDT project has led to it being invited to speak at a national conference on cycling marketing in April.

(e) Consultation

One of councils key objectives is to improve the way it consults with those who live and work within the district (particularly those groups who are described as 'hard to reach'. Whilst progress is being achieved, Council has recognised that it needs to do more and support this area it has agreed to establish a post of Consultation Officer within the Corporate Strategy (Communications) Service.

(f) Training

Elected Members and officers have taken part in media training this year, with another course lined up for the near future. In addition the Communications Officer has run media awareness training with Democratic Services and will be running a similar session with other services over the coming year.

6. CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07:

OUR PRIORITIES:

The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities that relate to my portfolio are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
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SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES
Communication / Consultation	2. To develop more effective community engagement to ensure the views of our citizens are taken into account during our decision making processes.
Sustainability	15. To reduce the amount of energy used by both the Council and households across the district
Diversity	20. To increase the awareness of equal opportunities and diversity issues.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

2.3	Work with partners to reduce alcohol related problems throughout the district
2.6	Improve consultation procedures, communication and involvement across the Council especially - with hard to reach groups and young people.
2.11	Action on climate change
3.7	<i>Sustainability Partnership Initiatives</i>
4.1	Continue to mainstream equal opportunity and diversity issues.

CONCLUSION:

Much of work in the areas above involves long term planning and getting key partner agencies to work together strategically on the identified priorities. This inevitably involves as much time in meetings as on delivery of programmes of work. Despite this I believe in all area of work listed above there have been some practical outcomes during the last year as well as the development of sound structures to ensure improvements in the future.

Key priorities of work in these areas for 2007/08 are

The Local Strategic Partnership

- Achieving targets set out in the current Community Strategy
- Production of the 2007 Sustainable Community Strategy
- Peer Review and 12 month LSP Improvement Plan

Sustainability

- Engagement of Sustainability Partnership in development of the Sustainable Community Strategy with respect to climate change in line with requirements of 'Safer and Stronger Communities' White Paper

- Mediation work with local Planners, the Vision Board and the voluntary sector (e.g. Energy Forum organisations) regarding transition towards a low-carbon district
- Delivery of short term targets in the Sustainability Partnership's 'Eat Local Action Plan'

Equality and Diversity

- publication of the Disability Equality Scheme
- achieving Level 2 in the Equality Standard by November 2007
- publication of the Gender Equality Scheme

Children and Young People

- Review and update of the Council's Child Protection Policy and procedures
- Engagement of children and young people in shaping the Council's services by piloting the Youth Panels in the district
- Ensure the District Council's role in Every Child Matters -Change for Children is identified and understood through the setting up of a Every Child Matters cross -service officer working group and the continuation of the CYP Cabinet liaison Group.

Communications

- Raise the quality of external publications further, both in terms of design and style as well as the use of language and plain English
- Encourage even greater cross service working across a range of marketing issues, building on the success of the Bay Radio advertising initiative, corporate advertising rate with Lancaster and Morecambe Newspapers, corporate photographic library, print, design and distribution register
- Developing the consultation function through the appointment of the consultation officer

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JOHN GILBERT, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COUNCIL HOUSING, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, STRATEGIC HOUSING AND INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

(December 2006 – February 2007)

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:



The areas covered by this portfolio are very diverse, although Council Housing, Strategic Housing and Environmental Health are all concerned with improving the living environment of the residents of the district. Information and Customer Services are more concerned with telling the public what we do and making it easier for them to conduct business with the Council. This last part of the portfolio is covered in a separate report under Alex Stone's name. As well as the 'regular' work there has been valuable input from the working groups on Cemeteries and Homelessness, whose suggestions for improvements were almost all accepted by Cabinet.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Transformational Government Cabinet Liaison Group (formerly the e-Government Cabinet Liaison Group)
- Mellishaw Park Cabinet Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Lancaster and District YMCA Management Board

Achievements in 2006/07

COUNCIL HOUSING SERVICES

- The Service has successfully achieved two major quality accreditations. The Repair and Maintenance Section has obtained ISO 9002 Quality Accreditation (which means that the whole Service is now accredited), and our sheltered housing has received accreditation from the Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies.
- Excellent progress continues to be made in improving the repairs service. The average time taken to undertake all repairs is now just 11 days (against a target of 15 days) and all tenants are being offered fixed appointments by trade operatives to visit at their first point of contact to report a repair.
- The modernisation of RMS is continuing. A pilot scheme to introduce mobile technology (hand held computers) has been successfully implemented and is now being extended. The office extension at White Lund Depot has finally been completed, thus enabling the full integration of the former client and contractor roles.
- The three yearly Independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey has produced our best ever results. The survey showed that 80% of tenants are very/fairly

satisfied with the overall service they received (compared with 70% in 2003) and satisfaction with the repairs service has increased from 63% to 75% in the same period.

- Work has now begun to review our arrangements for procuring responsive repairs and the HRA Capital Programme. We have appointed KPMG as consultants to assist in that process and the business case for the preferred option should be identified for consideration by Cabinet shortly.
- We have begun to look at how we are likely to operate a Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The Government wants all authorities to operate such a scheme by 2010, preferably incorporating both housing association and private sector properties. Once implemented, a Choice Based Lettings Scheme will radically alter the way properties are allocated.
- Some progress has been made in reducing the average time taken to allocate properties. It is recognised that this is one area where our performance needs to improve. Since developing an action plan, the average re-let time has reduced from 42.8 days to 40.2 days. Further improvements will still need to be made in order to achieve top quartile performance.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- The publication of the smoke-free regulations started a busy period of preparation for the Environmental Health team. An action plan for implementation of the forthcoming smoking prohibition on 1 July 2007 has been drawn up in partnership with Smokefree Lancaster District starting with a very successful seminar for businesses held in January. Recruitment of an officer is underway along with other publicity/enforcement initiatives to ensure the Council implements these regulations effectively.
- Following further, more detailed assessments on air quality in Lancaster, the Council is now in a position to begin Air Quality Action Planning. Officers have been researching experience from other local authorities and refining our approach to action planning as a result of this.
- The Service has managed a seamless integration of the cemeteries grounds maintenance section with staff from CC(D)S being transferred into Environmental Health. This integration followed a recommendation of the Cemeteries Task Group and is already resulting in benefits in terms of management and cost efficiencies. Good progress has now also been made with other Task Group recommendations, e.g. setting up the first "Friends" group (Torrisholme cemetery). The Memorial Safety team has been established and is busy testing and repairing memorials in Lancaster cemetery.
- The Service's Noise Control website pages were scored in the top 4 in a national survey of local authority websites by "Noise Bulletin", We scored the highest possible marks for quality of information.
- The Service has made great improvements to Corporate Health and Safety this year, beginning with a successful audit and a wider membership of the Health & Safety Committee. Particular success areas are corporate health and safety training and targeted, focused audits for issues such as Display Screen Equipment and Manual Handling. , The Council has been approached by HSE

who are intending to audit the Council's performance on Health and Safety this coming year and their initial feedback has been very positive.

- Enforcement activity in relation to cleanliness of the district has again remained a high priority for the Service. Officers have participated in the multi-agency Cleansweep programmes concentrating on litter, dog fouling and duty of care issues. In addition, approximately 150 targeted patrols for dog fouling have been undertaken this year with 7 fixed penalty notices for offences witnessed.
- The successful Street Warden Scheme objectives were taken forward through the new, extended Police Community Safety Officer Scheme with officers now being deployed across the District.

STRATEGIC HOUSING

- **Housing Standards**

The Housing Act 2004 introduced Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's), implementation has been a huge undertaking, but everything has been achieved satisfactorily and the new scheme became operative from 6 April 2006. The 2004 Act also introduced a new system of assessing the condition of properties, known as the 'Housing Health and Safety Rating System' (HHSRS). HHSRS replaces the Fitness Standard. The introduction of the HHSRS, together with HMO licensing, represents the biggest change in Housing Legislation in the last 80 years and has necessitated intensive staff training and a complete revision of all systems and procedures.

- **Homelessness**

The Housing Advice Team has been re-structured in order to provide designated officers' dealing with frontline advice, prevention work and homeless assessments. This has proven to be very successful resulting in a more focused service. However, the emphasis of the team's work continues to be placed upon prevention initiatives and early intervention, which has been greeted positively by external organisations.

'Drop in' advice services in order to raise awareness of homeless issues have increased and organisations are continually requesting more input and involvement from the service. There has been an overall reduction in the numbers of homeless applications and acceptances and further reductions in spend against the B&B budget. There has also been increased / improved access to both temporary dispersed housing (RSL managed) and accommodation within the private rented sector.

The Homeless Task Group issued their final report in February 2007, Overall, the findings of the Task Group were very positive and the vast majority of their recommendations have either already been initiated or are currently being developed. February 2007 also saw the publication of the final report of the Internal Audit Review undertaken on the Homeless function. Once again, this document provides a very positive and encouraging picture of the Homeless Service.

- **Enabling (Home Improvement Team)**

2006/07 has seen the development of the new Home Maintenance and Housing

Options Services for vulnerable households. These have been integrated with existing services, such as the district wide Handyperson Scheme, so as to enable the delivery of Home Improvement Agency type services designed to help make homes decent and to promote independence.

At the core of the Home Improvement type services is the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant programme. Major changes have been made throughout the year to streamline this form of assistance in line with the Governments recommended good practice. Service users are now provided with a first class service, which delivers adaptations in an efficient and timely manner. The DFG programme faces challenging times ahead both from the increased demand on the budget and the imminent changes to legislation expected from the Government,

The most recent HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) return reported an annual improvement in district wide energy efficiency of 2.32%. This achievement was double the estimated target for the year.

- **Neighbourhood Task Force**

The Council's partnership with Adactus Housing Association has produced 13 remodeled properties in the West End, 10 in Poulton and a further 47 properties have been acquired in those areas. Twenty one units are currently on site, . Encouragingly, most of these shared ownership properties have been purchased by people on low incomes who were previously renting in the private sector in Morecambe.

Elsewhere in the District, Adactus have refurbished 3 properties in Lancaster and 8 (for shared ownership) in rural areas.

The Exemplar scheme in the West End, now known as Chatsworth Gardens is at the final stages of. developer selection. Thirty-eight properties have been acquired and a further 7 are near completion.

Work in partnership with Planning Services has given a stronger focus to the provision of social rented units through S106 agreements - 11 units were agreed at the Bulk Road site in Lancaster.

The new budget includes funding that will allow YMCA to. Re-open emergency accommodation in Portland Street in a property owned by Council Housing. This will provide for 6 young people.

The budget also includes funding for the Home Support team, which will allow them to provide a flexible support package to socially excluded people who need help to maintain a home and become independent, moving from welfare to work.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Council Housing	Continue to ensure the viability of the 30-year business plan. To safeguard the continued provision of Council Housing as a social housing option in Lancaster District.
Strategic Housing	To improve our services to homeless people. To improve private sector housing conditions by the use of incentives and enforcement. To enable the provision of additional affordable homes throughout the district.
Environmental Health	Review the environmental warden scheme with a view to making it financially sustainable in the medium term and to link it closely with other agencies Cemeteries improvements Tougher approach to enforcement

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Continue to progress West End Regeneration through the Master Plan, regeneration of the Central Promenade Area; and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Area.
Focus on delivering the 30-year business plan and those improvements in service performance identified as priorities by tenants.
Continue to work with Housing Associations to provide appropriate temporary accommodation. Try to shift focus of work on preventative measures.
Seek to extend HMO registration to Lancaster and review our enforcement strategy when the Bill is enacted.

CONCLUSION:

The achievements listed above speak for themselves and reflect great credit on the officers. It is particularly gratifying that the Tenant Satisfaction Survey has shown such a high degree of satisfaction among the council house tenants. Environmental Health's Noise Control website was in the top 4 of a national survey, homelessness has been reduced and there will be more improvements as a result of new funding in the Budget. Remodelling of old, over-large properties is beginning to hugely improve the look of the West End as well as provide superb shared ownership homes.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR JANICE HANSON, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENGINEERING, PROPERTY SERVICES (December 2006 – February 2007) AND MORECAMBE REGENERATION

INTRODUCTION



EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group
- Morecambe Liaison Group
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group
- Morecambe Bay Partnership
- Winning Back the West End Steering Group

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

ENGINEERING SERVICE:

Achievements in 2006/07

- The Engineering Team are successfully implementing the last elements of the Coastal Defence project and in doing so have picked-up a National Environmental Award and have been nominated for a Constructing Excellence award
- The Cycling Demonstration Town Project continues for its second year against a background of being the only one of the six selected to not have Highway Authority status but that said we are continuing to make good and sound progress.
- Work has begun in the development of Shoreline Management Plans 2 (SMP2) where Lancaster will be the lead Authority for Morecambe Bay [Cell 11c]. This scheme will start to roll-out in the new financial year and is scheduled for completion in 2008/09.

- Through DEFRA grant aid and joint partnership funding with BNSC work is underway to investigate further the use of satellite imagery to map the movement/change of saltmarsh. This work is very much of a pioneering nature and so there is some risk of failure but all the indications are showing great promise for the use of this technique.
- Engineering are providing their expertise to procure a Contractor / Designer Partner for the West End Masterplan initiative where as a result of Lancashire County Council being unable to assist with the infrastructure redevelopment the roll-out of the overall scheme would otherwise have been severely compromised.
- Support is also being provided to large scale regeneration projects such as the Storey Institute

MORECAMBE REGENERATION:

Achievements in 2006/07

- The Neighbourhood Task Force has been established providing support to Poulton and the West End of Morecambe as well as providing a wider resource for the future development of Neighbourhood Management
- Neighbourhood Management is now firmly embedded in the West End and has embarked on a wide range of support for the local community
- Work started on the West End Gardens in January 2007, with completion expected in the summer. The primary focus is on play and families and includes a playground which will cater for all ages and be both inclusive and accessible. In addition to West End funding, monies have been secured from the European Regional Development Fund, SITA and the S106 agreement for Heysham Bus Depot
- Significant improvements are being made to Regent Park, including a new play area, seating, litterbins and the refurbishment of the park's boundary fence
- The implementation of a new waste management system for the West End has begun with zones 1 and 2 completed. Zone 3 will be in place by November 2007
- During 2006/2007, we have supported and funded such diverse activities as a firework display, a children's Christmas party, 140 Christmas trees and lights for local businesses, a young persons' football festival and many other similar initiatives
- We have established a website and a community newspaper for the West End, the '*West End Bulletin*' which informs the public of our extensive programme and encourages community participation
- The Neighbourhood Management premises on Albert Road have been converted so as to be used by the Police and PCSOs as a West End base thereby increasing their profile, providing better intelligence gathering and a reassuring presence for the public

- Poulton Neighbourhood Management continues to work with the local community and service providers to build on the progress already made. The new public conveniences on the Promenade and adjacent to Tesco opened in December 2006 which were part funded and developed by Neighbourhood Management
- Poulton also carried out a major piece of work looking at leisure opportunities for young people and a new piece of work is currently being developed around this theme
- There is considerable added value in having two regeneration/Neighbourhood Management initiatives adjacent in the centre of Morecambe allowing for joint working and the establishment of joint projects. We have established a joint Environment Sub Group and Appraisal Panel, and are jointly funding such projects as the Arson Reduction Vehicle and the forthcoming 1950s festival
- The THI scheme has moved towards a successful conclusion with a plan agreed for St Lawrence's Church now it is in positive ownership
- Work on the Midland Hotel continued, with the projected opening date early in 2008
- The Central Promenade plans were progressed and received a positive response at the public consultation. A planning application is now expected in Summer 2007

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

Future Developments for 2007/08

MORECAMBE REGENERATION

- Planning application for the Central Promenade site
- Opening of the Midland Hotel in early 2008
- Start on site for retail uses adjacent to Morrisons as the first phase of redeveloping the Frontierland site
- Opening of the refurbished Regent Park
- Completion of the Promenade Gardens work adjacent to the West End of Morecambe

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities

– they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Engineering	To improve parking provision for residents, local businesses and visitors. Implement programme of consultation and introduction of residents parking schemes.
	To manage transport more effectively so as to improve the safety of our citizens. Implement a programme of road safety improvements: 20 m.p.h. zone, safe routes to schools, etc. Implement the cycling strategy using external finance available and develop and implement a walking strategy.
	Member oversight of the Engineering Service.
Morecambe Regeneration	Ensure that Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of Morecambe.
	Continue to progress (in conjunction with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health as appropriate) West End Regeneration through the Masterplan, Regeneration of the Central Promenade area and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Area.
	Member oversight of the West End Partnership and Poulton Neighbourhood Management Service.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Ensure that Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the council's Vision in respect of Morecambe.
Continue to progress (in conjunction with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health as appropriate) West End Regeneration through the Masterplan, Regeneration of the Central Promenade area and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Area.
Member oversight of the West End Partnership and Poulton Neighbourhood Management Service.
To improve parking provision for residents, local businesses and visitors. Implement programme of consultation and introduction of residents parking schemes.
To manage transport more effectively so as to improve the safety of our citizens. Implement a programme of road safety improvements: 20 m.p.h. zone, safe routes to schools, etc. Implement the cycling strategy using external finance available and develop and implement a walking strategy.
Member oversight of Engineering.

CONCLUSION:

2006/07 has presented a number of significant challenges for the portfolio. With the demise of the Highways Partnership, the Council's remaining engineering staff have been successfully integrated with the Planning Services while still ensuring that the sea defence contract remained on track.

The regeneration of Morecambe remains a significant priority for the Council, and progress has been made on the Central Promenade and with the work in the West End.

Over the next six to nine months, people will see tangible outcomes, with the Midland Hotel opening its doors to the public early in 2008. In the West End, former HMOs have been converted and are now being marketed as family accommodation for sale at affordable prices. Later in the summer, work will start on Phase 1 of the Frontierland site and a planning application will be submitted on the Central Promenade site. Completion of public realm projects at Regent Park and the Promenade Gardens will improve the environment in the West End and give a boost to residents and investors by delivering positive changes to people's environments.

The Property Services portfolio contains a wide range of challenges in utilising the Council's assets to deliver regeneration and good value for money for the Council. The next 12-months will bring forward crucial decisions for the Council about how it wishes to develop to meet long-term accommodation needs and achieve its regeneration objectives, but I am happy that the Council has laid firm foundations for such important decisions by making the necessary budgeting provision to tackle the disrepair of our municipal buildings.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the staff and Members for their support during last year.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR PAT QUINTON, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING POLICY AND RURAL AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07



EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group
- Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group (Chairman)
- Transport Cabinet Liaison Group

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB (Limestone Heritage Project SC)
- Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB Unit
- Community Safety Strategy Group
- Forest of Bowland AONB Advisory Committee
- Lancashire Rural Partnership
- Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group
- Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership (formerly Northern Reaches Steering Group)
- LGA Rural Commission
- LSP Children and Young People Group
- The North West Rural Affairs Forum

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

PROGRESS DURING 2006/7

PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

- Performance on major planning applications (BVPI 109a) fell below national targets for two quarters due to the issuing of decisions on delayed applications. This has since been recovered but staff resources have been strained through a long term sickness case and the resignation of two Senior Officers to move to other authorities. Recruitment has only just secured new post holders who will commence work with the authority at the end of the financial year. Performance against BVPI 109b and 109c is back on track and currently expected to exceed our published targets for the year.

- The Local Development Framework has been delayed following the failure of other Core Strategies nation wide to be adopted. This delay was planned to ensure abortive costs were not incurred while the Planning Inspectorate reviewed the process. After undertaking further work to address issues raised by other authorities' experiences, a new timetable for submission has now been agreed.

- **Planning Policy and its relationship with the LDF and where we are**

At the moment, local planning policy is contained in the Lancaster District Local Plan (adopted 2004) and in a suite of supplementary planning guidance (SPG) documents. The Local Plan is being replaced by a number of Local Development Framework (LDF) documents, the most advanced of which is the Core Strategy. This key strategic document has been through two rounds of public engagement and was approved by Council in July 2006 for "submission" to the Secretary of State.

Submission is now programmed for April 2007.

- **Affordable Housing**

In seeking to meet affordable housing demands, the Council, through its planning policy, aims to encourage affordable housing as a component of market-led schemes and over the last year around 86 homes have been approved in principle. A substantial cash sum has also been agreed and will be available soon. Discussions are taking place with Strategic Housing as to how this money can best be used in the District.

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on affordable housing is being prepared and is currently out for consultation. This can be found on the LDF site.

- **Energy Efficiency**

The Planning Service is taking part in the climate change agenda in encouraging energy efficiency in new build. The new Planning Application Validation Guide has a section on energy efficiency which makes it clear that an Energy Statement is needed on all new residential, commercial and industrial development. Domestic extensions will need to specify what energy efficiency measures are being adopted.

A SPD is also being prepared on Design and this includes energy efficiency measures. Again, this is currently out for consultation.

The planning service is currently leading on several major development proposals and takes every opportunity to promote, and where possible secure, greater levels of energy efficiency. Examples include the Luneside East development which has been agreed, the former Bubbles site and the Centros Miller site where applications are still to be submitted

- **Parish Plan development and how we are going to use them**

There are currently 10 parish plans completed within the District covering many of the main rural settlements (Caton, Halton, Galgate, etc). These are valuable sources of information which are being used by the Planning Service

in the development of planning policies for the rural area. They also provide the opportunity to articulate local concerns and highlight issues that are important to rural communities, e.g. affordable housing, rural services, etc. In that sense, they are similar to mini “community strategies”. The Planning Service offers support to parish councils during the preparation of parish plans through professional advice and by supplying maps and information.

- **The place of the Planning Service within the LSP**

Under the new planning system, all forward planning policy documents must be founded in the Community Strategy and must be developed in conjunction with the Local Strategic Partnership. The Government sees the Local Development Framework (LDF) documents, particularly the Core Strategy, as providing the spatial element of the Community Strategy. This relationship will be reinforced as the Government’s latest proposals for “Sustainable Community Strategies” are enacted. This will place similar requirements on the preparation of Sustainable Community Strategies as currently exist for LDF documents in terms of demonstrating a sound evidence base and being subject to sustainability appraisal. This will require even closer working arrangements between the Planning Service and the LSP.

The Planning Service has used the existing Community Strategy as the starting point for the LDF Core Strategy and has engaged the LSP at several points during its production. It also has a representative on the relevant “building block”.

- **Building Control**

The Service’s Building Control operation has been considered for merger with Barrow and South Lakeland but no overriding business case could be made. The decision of the Project Board was that the interests of this Authority would be best served by not joining with the two other authorities but by concentrating on improving Lancaster's own already successful Building Control unit.

A modernisation agenda was kick-started by the 'Joint Working' talks and the lessons learned were used to change working methods and outdated practices. New performance criteria and National Performance Standards have been adopted and the Service can now exceed all of its performance targets.

Building Regulation applications, which consistently used to take 5 weeks to consider, are now dealt with within 10 days. All statutory requests for site inspections are dealt with during the morning following the receipt of a request. Additionally, every project is assured of re-inspections on a frequent and regular basis.

All of this adds up to a considerable improvement in service delivery without any increase in charges. The section has again contributed to the Authority's corporate success by showing a surplus on its account for the sixth successive year. However, a three-year financial forecast has now been put in place which will reduce Building Control Trading Account surpluses to zero.

- **Heysham/M6 Link**

The planning application has been called in by the Secretary of State and will be the subject of a public inquiry. The Planning Service will take a lead in presenting the City Council's evidence in support of the County Council as applicants.

RURAL AFFAIRS

Arnside/Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- **Sustainable Development Fund**

The AONB Service has been running a successful grant fund for two years, supported with funding from DEFRA. The money is available to the local community to support projects that bring social, economic and environmental benefits to the AONB.

In 2005, we funded 16 successful schemes and this year we have supported 20 interesting and diverse projects, ranging from a Morecambe Bay Wildlife and Wild Food event and a hedgelaying competition to an organic community garden and support for the "Bittern Bus".

Grants of almost £70,000 have been made so far this financial year and there are schemes in the pipeline which will ensure that the remaining £10,000 is allocated.

- **Limestone Heritage Project**

The Limestone Heritage Project will come to an end in March 2007. An integrated five-year programme, it received funding of almost £700,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other partners (Local Authorities, Natural England, The National Trust, Friends of the Lake District, RSPB and The Arnside/Silverdale AONB Landscape Trust). The project has delivered in the region of 100 individual heritage conservation schemes throughout the AONB.

The project managed to rebuild 9,500 metres of dry-stone walls and ran several training days, helping over 50 individuals to gain knowledge and appreciation of this traditional rural craft.

Utilising the skills of local builders, the project managed to consolidate and, in some cases, rebuild 12 lime kilns. These stone-built structures are direct evidence of the area's industrial heritage.

Ten historic ponds/wells that were identified for their heritage and nature conservation value have been restored and repaired.

Finally, the project improved and enhanced opportunities for different groups of society to access the countryside, including a disabled access scheme (a disabled car park, re-surfaced paths, user-friendly gates and boardwalk), new permissive 'Horse Routes', several leaflets and an improved website.

Further information on the Project can be obtained from the website www.arnsidesilverdaleaonb.org.uk

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

- **Carnforth Market Town Initiative:** The Carnforth MTI programme completed its second year in 2006/07, and a number of new projects were brought forward and approved for funding during the year. These include:
- **Lundsfield Pathfinder Project:** Aims to improve and upgrade public rights of way between Carnforth, Bolton-le-Sands and Nether Kellet.
- **Small Projects Fund:** Offers small grants for public private and voluntary sector organisations to support the overall improvements in the local area.
- **Joint Sports Project Feasibility Study:** Aims to establish the feasibility of Rugby, Football and Cricket Clubs merging on a new site.
- **Events and Festivals programme:** Commenced October 2006
- **Farmers Market:** Aims to provide access to local sources of food and other products in the town. Now operating quarterly.
- **Community Resource Centre:** This project has developed into a 'resource centre' housing a Children's Centre and Enterprise Centre. Feasibility work has been completed and a detailed application for the main scheme has been submitted to NWDA for approval.

Other projects which are being developed for implementation in Year 3 include:

- **Public realm improvements:** Aims to carry out a range of improvements in the town centre.
- **Tourism Project:** Aims to provide a co-ordinated marketing and branding package for the tourism offer in the area.
- **Car Parking:** Aims to provide additional car parking spaces in the town which reduce the on-street parking and congestion. Application expected October 06.
- **Ironworks House:** Will provide refurbished office space for rent to businesses.
- **Keer Bridge:** Aims to develop the old Gravesons site next to Millhead on Warton road.
- **Adult College Skills Course:** Aims to target low skills groups in Carnforth and assist them into skills and training.
- **The Carnforth and Area Regeneration Partnership (CARP):** Continues to meet regularly to oversee the programme and continues to be a very lively and enthusiastic body. Its members are actively involved in the development, appraisal and approval of individual projects. The MTI programme is currently due to end in March 2008, although a request has been made to NWDA for an extension into 2008/09 to allow certain projects to complete. CARP itself is intending to continue beyond the end of the MTI programme, possibly in the form

of a community enterprise company. CARP plans to hold its AGM in May with a focus on the achievements of the programme.

- **Carnforth Connect**

The project has now received funding support through the MTI scheme and will continue to deliver a service during the year. CARP Limited will be working closely with Lancashire County Council during the year to develop the project and the business plan for the long-term security of the project.

- **Leader+**

Continuing financial support has been given to the administration and marketing of the Lancashire Leader+ programme. The programme has supported Carnforth Canal Boat Project and Hornby Village Institute during the year. The marketing and business support project within Leader+ made twelve grants to businesses within Lancaster District during 2006/07 with a total value of £44,000 of grant support.

- **Hornby Community Resource Centre**

Following the extensive refurbishment of the Hornby Village Institute, it was officially opened in May 2006. Led by the Village Trust, the project was supported by the City Council through contingency funding to enable the Trust to secure Heritage Lottery Funding and through repayable funding to ease short term cash flow in the latter stages of the project. Since completion, the Centre has seen a dramatic increase in usage.

- **Tourism in the Rural Areas**

The Economic Development and Tourism Services continues to have representation on the Lancashire Rural Tourism Initiative Partnership (LRTi) Grant Panel and help to support potential rural projects in the district. Recently approved initiatives in this area include the Visit Bittern brochure being produced by the Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB group and a Farming, Interpretation and Environment Centre at Greenlands Farm at Tewitfield which is seeking support to develop a redundant barn on the farm into a Food, Craft Food Hub and Workshops and create a car parking area for the centre. LRTi also run an Undergraduate Training Scheme and we have assisted the student currently placed at Patty's Farm Barn and supported their application to build a bunk barn. Three staff have attended 'Welcome Walkers and Cyclists' training workshops run by Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board to learn about the criteria required for operators to achieve this accreditation.

Economic Development and Tourism Service also has representation on the LBTB themed marketing campaign steering group for 'Country Escapes'. These campaigns include a mix of E-newsletter, pay-per-click and direct mail brochures sent to 30,000 contacts. The project includes an Outdoor guide which also covers the Lancaster District, and we are attending the Outdoor Show as part of the Lancashire and Blackpool stand to promote our Lune Valley attractions and cycling guides.

We are also participating in the 'Connect Tourism' project in conjunction with LBTB whereby we are encouraging rural self-catering tourism operators to explore the benefits of on-line booking for their businesses. Several Lancaster

rural operators have expressed an interest and will receive a substantial discount on the software if they choose to participate.

The Lune Valley guide has been reprinted due to its increasing demand from visitors, and visits to the Lune Valley web pages on our www.citycoastcountryside.co.uk site are steadily increasing

We exhibited at the annual group operators show at Bolton for the 'Great Days Out Fair' and themed it around the Wray Scarecrow Festival including scarecrow merchandise for visitors to the stand. We have also assisted Lunesdale Studio Trail with the distribution of their flyers for their annual event in May.

- **Leeds Morecambe Community Rail Partnership**

The Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership Company Limited was set up and launched at Carnforth in May 2006. Promotional timetables have been produced and support has been given to walks' leaflets produced for the line by the Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group. Following discussions involving Lancashire County Council and Northern Rail, a Community Rail Partnership Officer (p/t) has been appointed and starts in post at the beginning of April, 2007. His early tasks will be to increase membership of the company and encourage greater public involvement, to run a name and logo competition with schools and represent the line at meetings of national transport bodies. It is likely that the CRP Officer will spend a small amount of time in the Lancaster Tourism Office but he will primarily be based in Preston. The LMCRP Co Ltd was chaired by the Tourism Manager for the first year but the chairmanship has now passed to a transport officer of North Yorkshire County Council.

- **Lancaster Canal Restoration Project**

Although meetings of the Lancaster Canal Restoration Partnership (formerly the Northern Reaches Restoration Group) have been attended, progress has been slow, partly due to cuts in DEFRA funding to British Waterways. The consultancy firm ARUP produced a baseline report in September 2006 as part of the Kendal Canal Head Masterplan. The steering group meets annually and the City Council is represented on meetings of the Executive Group and the PR and Fundraising group. The start date for work on Phase 1 of the project, in Kendal, has been put back to 2009. Marina development at the current head of navigation at Tewitfield is progressing.

- **Business Development Scheme**

Following the end of the Objective 2 Transitional Area programme in December 2006 (and the withdrawal of Lancashire Rural Recovery Action Plan funding), the former Caton ward remains the only rural ward eligible under the Scheme up to September 2008. One rural case was assisted during 2006/07.

RURAL POLICY

The policy framework for rural development in Lancashire was firmly established in 2006/07 with the publication of the Rural Lancashire Strategy which sets out the key challenges and opportunities in the County's rural economy. This followed an extensive exercise to produce an evidence base on the state of rural Lancashire. The partnership structures for rural development in Lancashire have also been formalised during the year, especially the linkages to regional strategy through the

Lancashire Economic Partnership. Although not directly represented on the Lancashire Rural Development Board, the City Council is represented at officer level on the Lancashire Rural Practitioner Steering Group which reports to the Board and at both Cabinet Member and Officer level on the Lancashire and North West Rural Affairs Forums.

This policy and organisational framework should ensure funding streams are targeted at the key issues identified at a strategic level. One of the first examples of this is the development of the Lancashire Implementation Plan for the Rural Development Programme for England.

The year has also seen the culmination of the Lancashire Rural Pathfinder project led by Lancashire County Council. Among the recommendations included in the draft Manifesto are:

- The development of a sophisticated public service tasking framework is essential to achieve an equitable level of public service provision in rural areas. Such a framework must recognise that the added cost of delivering services in rural areas (the 'rural premium') is a barrier to social inclusion and service equity and that directing service delivery needs to become more flexible and 'local'.
- Embedding rural service delivery within mainstream public service delivery (avoiding reliance on temporary grant interventions) will require the development of effective practical 'rural proofing' tools
- Decision making/taking affecting rural communities must be improved by balancing the identified needs and aspirations of a community with relevant strategic priorities and social interests. This means effectively linking local community planning to Community Strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND STRATEGIC HOUSING

Environmental Health

- A detailed assessment of air quality in Carnforth has been undertaken this year and concluded that an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is required for the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide which is caused primarily by road traffic exhaust emission. The AQMA will be concentrated around the A6 Scotland Road-Lancaster Road-Market Street crossroads. The next stage is a further assessment of air quality to confirm that air pollution is exceeding the statutory limits and, if so, this will lead to air quality action planning with extensive public consultation.

Strategic Housing

- House prices in rural areas of the District are now well out of reach of those who have grown up in rural communities and are in low paid employment. But the development of rural affordable housing presents particular problems in terms of land allocation and the detailed work that needs to be undertaken with Parish Councils to assess demand and suggest potential sites. The City Council does not currently have a dedicated resource to work with rural communities to promote rural housing schemes: a Rural Housing Enabler could liaise with social housing providers and act as an advocate for communities. A bid was made to the LSP Second Homes Fund in January and this was supported to the second round and is currently under consideration. The bid is for £25,000 which would

pay for either a shared post to be created with another authority or the services of an agency such as the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust.

CITY CONTRACT SERVICES

Cleansing

- A Cleansing Improvement Officer has been in post since 01 January 2007. The purpose is to review the cleansing operation within the District and already some changes have been made in the rural areas, e.g. better location of litter bins and dog bins and changes to the frequency of cleansing.
- Fly Tipping Task Group report focussed on problem of rural fly tipping and all Parish Councils were asked to provide evidence. (It was disappointing that only one representative attended.)
- Arrangements are in place between Police and County to deal with the problem of slurry and mud spillage on rural roads.

Recycling

- By September 2008, the rural areas will be included in the kerbside collection arrangements (except in the sparse population areas where it is operationally impractical).
- Bulky Matters service is being well used in rural areas and a smaller vehicle is used where there are access problems.

Grounds Maintenance

- This year, playgrounds at Glasson Dock and Yealand Redmayne have been refurbished as part of the playground improvement programme
- If required, support is given to villages who are entering the "In Bloom" competitions.

CORPORATE POLICY

- We continue to work with Parish Councils through the Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils (LAPTC). Both I and Richard Tulej attend the bi-monthly meetings of the Lancaster Committee. There is a standing agenda item at all meetings for a report or discussion on matters of mutual interest and officers from the City Council have attended to give presentations on matters of interest to the Parishes.
- We have throughout the year been reviewing with officers our progress in applying rural proofing principles to the decisions made by Council. This is somewhat frustrating as all decisions have an impact to some extent and it is impossible to be briefed on everything that is going on. It is difficult to concentrate on those which have the most impact or are the most important.
- We have been testing out ideas about developing a pilot neighbourhood management approach within the parishes and have had some preliminary discussions, mainly with the LAPTC. We were not able to obtain any support funding from the County Council's Rural Premium Fund to develop this proposal

but hope this work can be developed in the coming year. I think this is a better option for identifying rural need and the means by which it can be met. This is of course consistent with our unitary bid proposals and the way we intend to take forward Parish Plans.

- During the autumn a review of special expenses was completed; this was in recognition of the perceived inequalities that exist within the current arrangements and their inflexibility to cater for any changes to the parish make-up of the district. Because of the uncertainties over the bid for unitary status and the project for rural neighbourhood management, it was clear this was not the right time to establish new financial arrangements. Whilst it may not be possible to implement any changes until after 2008/9, all parishes will have the opportunity to contribute fair and workable financial arrangements in the longer term.

LEISURE SERVICES

Last year saw the creation of a new service - Cultural Services - encompassing functions undertaken within the former Leisure Services and the former Arts and Events Service. The opportunity was taken to undertake a fundamental organisational review in consultation with users, staff, key stakeholders and partners. The new Cultural Services comprises Development (Arts, Leisure and Community); Facilities and Events (Sports and Arts Venues, Outdoor Facilities, and Festivals), and Support Services (includes grants and funding of key cultural partners). Cultural Services' Business Plan allies closely with the Council's Corporate Objectives with the aim of balancing targeted and universal services.

Highlights for 2006/2007 :

- Increasing throughput and participation rates at the Council's rural facilities and programmes
- Securing external funding to carry out capital improvements to the community swimming pools
- Supporting rural arts initiatives via Community Arts Grants

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Planning Policy	Oversee the Planning Service
Rural Affairs generally and a number of services specifically as they affect rural areas, e.g. Planning, Housing, Economic Development, Leisure (to be added as required)	Ensure that Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of the rural areas. Ensure that all parts of the Local Development Scheme undergo sustainability appraisal. Implement the Market Towns Initiative in Carnforth.
	Safeguard provision of Council Housing in rural areas.
	Enable provision of affordable housing in rural areas.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Ensure that Regeneration Policy and programmes take account of the Council's Vision in respect of the rural areas.
Ensure that all parts of the Local Development Scheme undergo sustainability appraisal.
Implement the Market Towns Initiative in Carnforth.
Safeguard provision of Council Housing in rural areas.
Enable provision of affordable housing in rural areas.
Oversee the Planning Service.

CONCLUSION:

I have now had four years in this job and it is difficult to know whether having a Rural Portfolio holder is the right way of making sure the rural areas of the district are not forgotten or neglected. Currently, I cannot see a better way of dealing with this problem.

It has been extremely helpful attending the various liaison groups, and seeing how one thing affects another in the rural areas and also to attend the many and various outside bodies that deal with rural matters, in the District, at County, Regional and National level. It is clear that the needs in the rural parts of our district are very like those throughout the country. Difficult access to services, lack of public transport, loss of village shops, pubs and post offices and unaffordable homes means that a community can die all too easily. Funding of new initiatives is nearly always only short term and is not sustainable.

At Regional and County level, it is being said that these problems all need to be taken on board alongside the urban areas and in many cases, particularly economically, one can help the other. The County Rural Pathfinder found that rural service delivery must be embedded within the “mainstream”. This message is supported by rural practitioners but needs to be pushed hard to those in the urban areas. The proposals in the Unitary bid for neighbourhood management may well be an answer in our district.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR RON SANDS, CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CULTURE, MUSEUMS AND TOURISM

INTRODUCTION



EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

- Cabinet
- Morecambe Liaison Group

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES etc:

- British Resorts and Destinations Association
- English Historic Towns Forum
- LGA Tourism Forum
- LSP North West Lancs Lifelong Partnership Group
- Museums Advisory Panel
- Older Persons Partnership Board
- Tern Project Working Group
- 50forward Link Age Board

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

TOURISM:

As the Vision Board states, "Tourism and leisure was an essential part of the district's past and it will be integral to its future". The new Tourism Strategy for the district was approved in June 2006 and will help steer tourism in this district for the next four years. The strategy was delayed for almost one year in order to ensure that it conformed to visitor economy strategies being developed by the North West Development Agency and the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board. The Tourism Strategy also dovetailed with the Vision for Lancaster and Morecambe.

Progress has been made over the past 12 months and significant investment (£50k) has been made in local tourism, as exemplified by the opening in January 2007 of the refurbished Morecambe Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

In 2006, even before the refurbishment, Morecambe Tourist Information Centre (TIC) was awarded the TIC of the Year award by the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, for the second time in three years. Following negotiations with Lancashire County Council, a new Partnership Agreement is being finalised for the future operation of the Morecambe VIC which will put the relationship on a firmer footing.

Plans are being made for the transfer of the Lancaster TIC to the Storey Institute in 2008, with the benefit of experience gained from the refurbishment work at the Morecambe VIC. Support has been given to the information room at Carnforth Station and to the tourist information points located in rural post offices and shops.

The STEAM report for 2005, the most current estimated figures for value and volume of tourism available for the district, indicate that the value of tourism to the local economy rose slightly from £216.99 million in 2004 to £217.71 million in 2005. Spending by day visitors saw a 6% drop, from £110.19 million to £103.7 million, probably due to weather and cheap overseas holidays. However, the same time period saw an increase in the amount of people staying in serviced accommodation, up by 22% over 2004 but a drop in day visitors from 4.95 million in 2004 to 4.74 million in 2005. Even though total visitor numbers dropped by 4% the spending was almost £1 million extra in 2005 and the number of local jobs supported by tourism remained stable at 4,063.

Due largely to competition from cheap holidays abroad, visitor numbers to the TICs dropped slightly from 2005 to 2006. During 2006 Lancaster TIC had 76,879 personal visitors and a total of 107,411 enquiries, down from a total of 116,211 in 2005. Similarly, Morecambe TIC had 107,621 visitors and a total of 137,683 enquiries in 2006 compared to a total of 146,516 in 2005.

Marketing activity has included the production and distribution of 60,000 official Holiday Guides for the district, featuring cover artwork by local artist Chas Jacobs and 55,000 attractions leaflets and 15,000 events flyers. The numbers have been streamlined in line with demand and with increasing use of the internet. Direct mail advertising has replaced our more traditional magazine campaigns and has produced excellent results to date with over 5,000 leads in the first two months of the adverts appearing. We have also re-mailed all enquirers from last year's media campaign (where permissible) and Brochurelink has undertaken the bulk mailings to TICs on our behalf to allow TIC staff to concentrate on the individual enquiries. Other brochure distribution activity has been addressed and outsourced where appropriate to provide better coverage.

From the existing "visitmorecambe", "visitlancaster" and "visitlunevalley" websites, a new content-managed umbrella website has been developed during 2006: www.citycoastcountryside.co.uk. This has brought all sites together and is constantly being updated and developed to act as our most important marketing tool. A concept postcard campaign has also been created and sent out with copies of the holiday guide to encourage enquirers to go onto the website and leave their details. Other web developments include an e-newsletter template which will enable us to keep in touch with the industry and potential visitors without relying solely on paper mailshots. We have also been working with a local company to look at pay-per-click campaigns and optimisation work to ensure that our website is regularly visited.

We have produced a new cycling brochure (with some financial assistance from the Celebrating Cycling project) and additional publicity for Carnforth. We are also in the process of completing a similar walking brochure, 3000 of which will be distributed through Sustrans. Two travel shows were attended at Manchester and at the Reebok stadium in Bolton, the latter attracting an increased number of group travel organisers. We are also participating in the Outdoor Show at the NEC in conjunction with Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board (LBTB). Partnership work is continuing with the LBTB including participation in the Country Escapes, Coastal Contrasts and Living Legends campaigns as well as projects with the Conference Desk and Lancashire Rural Tourism Initiative Project.

In addition to the biannual Destination Benchmarking Report, we have produced our own accommodation bookers' satisfaction survey and report that highlights the value of the TIC accommodation booking service and gives some excellent feedback on visitor experience. Lancaster University students are in the process of completing research into cost per conversion and operator satisfaction, which will also identify areas for improvement in future projects.

CULTURE:

Culture/Arts and Events/Museums

Last year saw the creation of a new service - Cultural Services, encompassing functions formerly undertaken within the former Leisure Services and the former Arts and Events. The opportunity was taken to undertake a fundamental organisational review in consultation with users, staff, key stakeholders and partners. The new Cultural Services comprises Development (Arts, Leisure & Community); Facilities and Events (Sports and Arts Venues, Outdoor Facilities, and Festivals); and Support Services (includes grants and funding of key cultural partners). Cultural Services' Business Plan allies closely with the Council's Corporate Objectives with the aim of balancing targeted and universal services. The new Service also manages the partnership with Lancashire County Museums Service that delivers museums services in the district.

Highlights for 2006/2007 include :

- Running sports facilities, venues and programmes that have provided a service for more than one million customers
- The successful commissioning and opening of the Splash Park in Happy Mount Park
- A highly successful festivals and events programme, including Jazz and Heritage Festivals
- A renewed Festivals Innovation Fund (FIF) for 2007
- Hosting the Brit Award winning "*Arctic Monkeys*" in the Dome
- Organising and managing a "diversionary" activities programmes as part of the Crime Prevention Partnership
- Planning for the future by commissioning an audit and study of existing provision of sport, recreation and open space
- The partnership has continued to deliver a high quality museums service in Lancaster which contributes to the strong presence of Heritage in the City. The relationship between the Lancashire Museums Service and the City Council continues to strengthen and the Museums Service is now contributing to wider initiatives such as the Lancaster Vision.
- All the museums in the partnership were awarded Accreditation status by Museums, Libraries and Arts (MLA). This is an external assessment of a wide

range of professional standards and confirms the quality of the service delivered

- The Young Roots Heritage Lottery funded project worked with young people in Lancaster and Morecambe celebrating the past through museum collections and looking forward to the future working with a stained glass artist. It was delivered in partnership with More Music, Folly and Signposts
- The Service is delivering a series of activities and exhibition to mark the 200th Anniversary of the 1807 Abolition of Slavery. These build on the successful Slave Trade Arts Memorial Project (STAMP).
 - Archives to Airwaves: Three writers spent up to 4 days each in the reserve collections/archives of Lancaster Maritime Museum and the Judges' Lodgings in Lancaster. They then wrote an eight-minute piece for radio inspired by their research and explorations of this material. The work was then recorded and broadcast on Radio Lancashire on 5th November during this year's Litfest Festival.
 - A specially devised project for five local secondary schools runs from Jan 2007-June 2007. This includes performances, collaborative learning and exhibitions spread over three sessions supporting the History and Citizenship curricula. Over 400 students at Central and Morecambe High have already taken part.
 - Significant art installations at the Judges Lodgings and Maritime Museums take place later in the year.
- A full exhibition programme has been delivered in Lancaster with a varied offering at all sites. Particularly successful was the "Beasts of the Nile" show at the City Museum which attracted both family and school visits. Also notable was the first substantial showing of the work of local artist Philip Gilchrist, whose landscapes of Sunderland Point and the surrounding area were well received.
- Much behind the scenes work has been done to raise the funds to acquire the Roman tombstone found during archaeological work in Lancaster. The stone is due to be conserved and then exhibited in Lancaster. A publication is also in preparation.

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES	
SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Arts and Events	To see Phase 1 of the Morecambe Action Plan completed
Leisure	A review to assess the requirements for improved, fit for purpose, facilities for live music and other events
Museums	
Tourism	Implementation of the Tourism Strategy

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES
Use the Community Festivals Fund and the Festivals Innovation Fund to promote new festivals.
Continue efforts to improve the financial performance of the main leisure and sporting facilities. Integrate our leisure and sporting provision.

CONCLUSIONS:

The portfolio of Culture, Museums and Tourism encompasses a wider range of diverse activity aimed at improving the quality of life for residents and offers visitors a reason to come to the district. My report details the range of achievements in the past year which are impressive, and the result of productive partnerships between staff, customers and a range of organisations who contribute funding and support in a variety of ways. Cultural Services and Tourism remain discretionary activities for a Council like Lancaster but provide the important services that make the district different.

By the time this report is published, details will have been announced of massive expansions in the provision of private sector led entertainments, festivals and events across the district, including yet further impressive developments in both Happy Mount Park and Williamson Park, and at the Platform and Dome. Private sector provision and partnerships is the most sustainable way forward. The long and often painful transition from the days when the City Council sought directly to micro manage and provide a vast programme of entertainments is drawing to a close. The Festivals Innovation Fund is providing much seedcorn for future harvests. The summer of 2007 should demonstrate that this transitional period is ending and a new and exciting era of events provision is opening up. The sea defence improvements have brought such innovations as sand enriched beaches, a new jetty style walkway out into the sea (with angling facilities), and a completely transformed West End seafront gardens with events arena, new parking, water features, vista viewpoints suitable for seabird watching, separate play areas for different age groups, and

refreshment facilities. Such significant improvements will bring in their wake a surge of activities such as the Kite Festival and the Sand Sculpture demonstrations. These improvements will greatly increase day visitor numbers, providing expanding audiences to make viable yet more events and entertainments.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff and Members for their support during last year.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT

FORMER COUNCILLOR ALEX STONE CABINET MEMBER FORMERLY WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTRATION (NOW DEMOCRATIC), INFORMATION, PROPERTY AND REVENUES SERVICES

INTRODUCTION



When Councillor Stone moved out of the district mid-way through the year, the decision was made not to replace him for the remainder of the year, and his portfolio was shared among existing cabinet members.

FORMER EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIPS:

- Cabinet (part)
- Lancaster and Morecambe Markets Committee (part)

EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES Etc:

None.

MEMBERSHIP OF PARTNERSHIPS:

None.

CABINET LIAISON GROUPS:

- Former Chair – of the former E-Government Cabinet Advisory Group.

OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES:

DEMOCRATIC (FORMERLY ADMINISTRATION) SERVICES & CIVIC AND CEREMONIAL AFFAIRS:

Elections Office

Electoral Administration Act 2006 gained Royal Assent in July and included a host of new working practices which were brought into force in phases:

- Regulations in September 2006 brought about changes to the method of annual canvassing to produce the Register of Electors. As we recruit canvassers in July to start work at the end of August this required a rapid change of plan and re-evaluation of the budget. Fortunately the response from staff across the council to requests for people to go 'door-knocking' and from Members in finding us some additional funding to pay them has meant that we achieved a response rate of 98.97% compared to 82.5% last year. Internet registration was introduced

alongside the telephone registration which is now in its third year and proved popular with numbers using both methods well up on last year.

- Next came regulations to introduce changes in the way postal votes are dealt with. All applicants had to reapply between 1st and 31st January 2007 to enable 'personal identifiers' in the form of dates of birth and signature matching to be introduced. New equipment is being purchased to enable electronic signature matching to be undertaken at the May 2007 elections.
- Regulations have also introduced a range of other changes including a reduction in the minimum age for candidates and allowing ballot papers to be 'marked' in different ways, i.e. the stamping instrument perforations can be replaced by a watermark or other printed mark.

Work on the implications of this Act has dominated the year and will no doubt continue to do so until the final preparations are in place for the May elections.

Advice and information has also been produced for prospective councillors interested in standing for election in 2007. This is now available on the council's website and in leaflet form.

Members Services

Members Services have now formally taken over the responsibility for Youth Games arrangements in conjunction with the Cultural Services, sorting out travel arrangements for the entire party to visit Almere in July 2006. Plans are now well underway for the trip to Aalborg in July 2007.

Work is continuing to improve the traditional civic programme – Council agreed a raft of recommendations from the Civic Task Group which are now being investigated for implementation in stages. A lot of work has also been done to develop a Civic web page to help 'market' the Mayoralty.

Democratic Support

Also moving ahead has been the continued progress with the use of technology in committee management. Almost all Councillors are now using computers to access committee documents and other information to a greater or lesser degree and the consolidation of this process and support to members in using the system continues to be a major objective of the Service.

A lot of work is being undertaken to move ahead with making improvements to Member Development so as to achieve the North West Charter for Member Development. This includes development of a good induction programme and information for newly elected councillors in May 2007 as well as ongoing opportunities for existing members. A members' newsletter and information page on the intranet have been introduced this year as part of this initiative and it is hoped that we will be sufficiently far forward to be successfully assessed for this in July/August 2007.

Other

Democratic Services' enquiries (with the exception of elections and electoral registration for the time being) have been transferred to Customer Services. Volumes of calls are not high on democratic and member information but other enquiries and complaints currently dealt with by the Information Management Officer have transferred together with Information Management generally.

INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

In April 2006 Information Services became Information and Customer Services. Pulling together these two important core activities - our customer interface and the management of information will strengthen the way that Lancaster City Council can engage with its customers and citizens. During this municipal year Information and Customer Services have played a valuable role coordinating, planning and implementing IT systems for the benefit of the Council as a whole and further improved how the whole Council presents itself by working at a corporate level on issues such as standard telephone techniques etc.

In particular, the service has achieved significant savings to the Council's Revenue Budget in this years `Star Chamber' exercise whilst continuing to deliver on its key projects.

In this municipal year the role of the e-Government Cabinet Liaison Group (e Gov CLG) has been revised, reviewing the terms of reference of the group and allowing Lancaster City Council to build upon their success in implementing e-Government by wholeheartedly adopting the Transformational Government agenda. The new group will engage all services to ensure that they can continue to meet the Transformational aims of customer-centred, efficient and professional services - using technology to support and enable change rather than for its own sake.

This year Information and Customer Services have:

- Developed and implemented the new Corporate Customer Services Policy - this policy outlines standards for dealing with customers whether face to face, on the telephone, by letter or email. The policy helps our staff to deal with challenging customers and those who may have special needs, for example, documents in Braille. The Corporate Customer Services Policy forms the basis of all Customer Services training as part of induction and further development.
- Installed and commissioned a new Council Housing Rents system - the new system is more accurate, easier to use which will reduce the need for staff training and has reduced overall costs.
- Successfully piloted a mobile working project - Task Mobile - which allows Council staff to input and update repairs information whilst they are actually in tenant's homes thus allowing officers to work more quickly and effectively. The repairs appointments system has also been updated giving more specific times for appointments - saving officer and tenant's time.
- Installed and commissioned a new and modern telephone system for Council Housing - this system will allow Council Housing to distribute, monitor and manage calls using the latest technology - thus providing a better service to customers and management information to allow better planning of future workloads. The system can be fully integrated with the Customer Services system in the future.
- Led the Customer Services project - this project has completely changed the way a number of street scene services are delivered by providing dedicated staff, who deal with telephone queries and record service requests in a specialised system, which then passes service requests to City Contract Services. This has improved

the number of phone calls to waste and cleansing which are answered, reduced repeat calls and enabled CCS staff to have access to operational information so that they can plan workloads and schedules.

- Continued to upgrade the Council's infrastructure including upgrades of the network to allow fast access to information for anywhere within the Council's buildings, investment in advanced storage and recovery systems, etc. All desktop computers are now less than four years old, providing our staff with computers that are fit for purpose, and a programme of upgrading Microsoft Office to the latest versions has begun. The redundant equipment is sent to be recycled for community use by a not-for-profit organisation.
- Protected the City Council's computer network from over 50,000 computer virus attacks each month, providing a high level of security for the Council's corporate systems despite ever increasing and more sophisticated attacks.
- Extended the roll out of computer technology to Council members as part of the Democratic Modernisation project by installing wireless network points in Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls. This will enable the Councillors to use all the facilities of their notebooks in Council meetings.
- Worked with City Council (Direct) Services and local charity Furniture Matters to set up the Bulky Matters project - this innovative partnership has reduced the amount of bulky household waste going to landfill from 100% to 40% thus saving many tonnes of landfill per year, at the same time improving the service to customers by introducing appointments and an in-house collection service.
- Completed paid-for consultancy for a neighbouring district- enabling them to benefit from our expertise in Land, Property and Geographic Information Systems.
- Expanded the existing Geographic Information Systems to enable customers to identify their local Councillors, report faults and access a host of other relevant information based upon their postcode or a map location.
- Continued to build upon the redesigned Council website to make it easier to find information, report problems etc. Usage of the website continues to grow strongly - unique users have grown by around 100% over the last twelve months.
- Worked with the Local Directgov Programme which aims at simplifying customers access to all government services - both local and central. The new website takes customers straight from the national Directgov site to the specific Lancaster City Council service page they require, and is intended to increase the number people visiting the Council's website and encourage more people to take up our vast array of on-line services which include everything from paying your council tax to checking out housing benefit, viewing the latest planning applications to applying for a job.
- Incorporated the Council's main switchboard (582000) into Customer Services - this has improved the percentage of calls answered from 86% to 97% and enabled reception staff to concentrate fully on face to face visitors.

PROPERTY SERVICES:

Achievements in 2006/07

- Development Agreement signed with Centros Miller for the Canal Corridor Development. Further progress is now being made towards the submission of a planning application.

There will be major challenges ahead in terms of professional workload and advice regarding property if this scheme is to be successful.

- A similar situation exists with the Central Promenade site in Morecambe where Urban Splash have signed a Development Agreement with the Council and are now proceeding towards a planning application in 2007.
- The Access to Services works are proceeding towards the completion of a feasibility study in mid 2007. In the meantime initial plans for the provision of Customer Service Centres in both Town Halls have been approved. Contractual negotiations for the provision of CSC's are now in hand.

There will be a very heavy workload on complex proposals to ensure that the Access to Services proposals are brought to fruition. It is essential that the project is properly resourced if the proposals are to be successful.

- Building Condition Surveys have been completed and a 5-year programme of works has been prepared for budget purposes.

The condition of the Council's buildings are very poor and it is imperative that their condition is improved to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This will require substantial funds to be made available – failure to do so is likely to lead to closure of buildings or legal action against the Council.

- The integration of the Parking team into Property Services has been completed, albeit that they are operating from different buildings in different towns. So far there has been success in completing a 2-year review of the DPE process and a draft Parking Strategy has been approved for consultation.
- A "Peer Review" of asset management has concluded that the strategic work of the Service is progressing well.

The main outcome was to identify the need for resource levels to be appropriate for the work that the Council is undertaking in managing and developing its assets.

REVENUES & BENEFITS:

Achievements 2006/7

- Maintained a high performing benefits service with less resources than in 2005/6
- Benefits service rated as "excellent" against self assessment of DWP Performance Standards
- Continued to improve partnership working with other agencies and stakeholders, more notably with private sector landlords.

- Implemented electronic methods of payment of benefit to claimants as well as landlords. This is saving time and money and will effectively prepare for the introduction of the Local Housing allowance in the near future.
- Increased customer satisfaction levels – interim report shows 82% are satisfied or very satisfied with overall benefits service. Council Tax satisfaction survey showed 93% thought the service was good or very good.
- Despite some negative feedback, the Single Person Discount check was highly successful with 795 households (almost 4% of all SPD claimants) withdrawing or having the discount cancelled. Additional Council Tax revenue of £238,000 is estimated to have been raised.
- Successful internal audit reports on both NNDR and Council Tax show these services as well managed and controlled.
- The project to safeguard current document management records and working practices has been initiated.
- Performance management information has been improved and is now all reported through E-scendency and the PRT mechanisms.
- Effective benchmarking continues to help the service to review, monitor and improve.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT:

Future Developments for 2007/08

PROPERTY SERVICES:

- Produce a planning application for the Canal Corridor scheme for consideration by planning committee by September 2007
- Produce a planning application for the first phase of the central Promenade site by September 2007
- Subject to satisfactory tenders being received and approved by the Council, to procure Customer Service Centres in Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls
- To produce feasibility studies by July 2007 on two options for office accommodation under the Access to Services Review
- In accordance with the Parking Strategy, to complete a review of long stay parking facilities in Lancaster by December 2007

CORPORATE PLAN AND COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES 2006/07:

OUR PRIORITIES:

We are a large organisation with an immense range of activity. Our priorities help us focus on the things we need to do and provide even greater clarity to deliver real and lasting achievements.

The Council has considered all these issues and identified those areas where we believe we can have the greatest positive impact. These form the Council's priorities – they will guide our work and investment over the next three years. The Corporate Plan and Coalition Cabinet Priorities are set out below:

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
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SERVICE AREA	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES
Revenues	To provide a modern customer focused Benefits Service that aspires to meet the standards set by the Government and our customers
Property	
Administration (now Democratic)	
Information & Customer Services	To use new technology to maximise access to our services by all our customers Refocus services around the needs of our citizens and other customers and improve customer satisfaction with both the Council and the services it provides.

COALITION CABINET PRIORITIES

Develop Customer Contact Centres in both Morecambe and Lancaster. There will be a radical look at our buildings to make them both more efficient and more accessible to all our citizens. The standards of service that customers can expect will be published and the complaints system will be revised.

Maintain and consolidate the improvements in the Benefits Service.

Encourage the provision of broadband throughout the district and help disseminate good practice in rural areas.

Modernising the way we deliver all our services and making them accessible to all who use them.

CONCLUSION:

The new telephone call centre has already improved access to waste and cleansing services, and this will be rolled out to other services shortly. We can also look forward to face-to-face customer centres at the two town halls in the coming year.

