



Business Plan 2011-2015

2014/15 Refresh

Council 26th February 2014

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LEADER'S STATEMENT

This remains a challenging time for West Lancashire. The Council's task is to provide the best possible services within the resources available to it. At a time of shrinking public finance and with economic challenges facing the whole country we remain committed to achieving this through efficient and effective service delivery for the residents and businesses of the borough.



**Leader of the Council
Councillor Ian Grant**

We do not underestimate the task. Levels of government grant have diminished and, despite some recent signs of recovery, this position is intensified by a reduced income in a number of areas due to the general economic climate. This has meant that the Council needed to achieve savings of around 30% over the period 2011-2015. To balance the Council's budget in this environment has meant constant, managed change. Doing nothing has not been an option.

The Business Plan sets out how we will deliver the Council's priorities including the savings, efficiencies and income necessary to maintain a balanced budget position and support the effective financial and operational management of the Council. Good progress has been made to date and we have delivered £4.53 million of permanent savings towards the £5.55 million we anticipate is required.

Our track record of financial management and service performance remains a good one and I am determined we will continue in this direction. We have the best record in Lancashire for zero or low Council Tax increases. As a result of the work undertaken as part of this Business Plan over the last 12 months, policy options identifying savings have been developed ready for implementation in 2014/15. This means that, once again, we anticipate being able to deliver our services on budget, whilst minimising the impact on the standard and range of service that customers receive from their Borough Council. Sustaining this beyond 2014/15 will be tough. Our aspiration is to maintain performance and the range of services that we

provide where possible, but reshaping in some areas is going to be necessary.

Our approach is to continue to prioritise spending carefully in line with local needs identified through listening and consulting with residents, businesses and stakeholders. Just as importantly, we will need to communicate the outcomes from this process. Innovative working, harnessing technology, and continuing our partnership working will all help maintain the momentum towards achieving the required financial efficiencies.

Where appropriate, we may consider the further use of reserves to allow time to produce results, however simply using reserves without ensuring the sustainability of services is not a viable long-term strategy. Our priorities are therefore to balance our budget and, as guided by our residents and stakeholders, also to care for our borough and work towards sustainable regeneration and growth.

In delivering these priorities, we will apply the following three principles.

- **Lean** – we will continue to look for ways of providing better services at reduced cost. For example, working with partners Lancashire County Council and Wigan Council has brought dividends through economy of scale, expertise and investment power. We will also re-engineer services so that they are customer focussed and as lean as possible.
- **Local** – where services are best provided locally we will work with partners. For example, we deliver grass cutting of verges and hedge trimming on behalf of Lancashire County Council. Where we can, we will continue to place emphasis on supporting the development and enhancement of the voluntary and community sectors since these sectors are often best placed to deliver services and support to local communities. We will also be transparent – clear about what we spend public money on, and why.
- **Fair** – to the tax payer and to staff. We firmly believe that the best response to the reduced finance available is a managed approach to change. Our Business Plan sets out a measured approach that has been maintained through its annual refresh. Each service has been studied in depth through Major Service Reviews to look at the level each service is

best delivered at and where there are areas of discretion. We will continue with this successful approach. Since the Business Plan was implemented, we have become a smaller organisation and further contraction is likely. In making these changes, we will unashamedly seek to minimise compulsory redundancy amongst staff where possible as this is better for the tax payer, for staff and for the local economy.

Although this plan provides the direction for the coming year, I would like to give a brief mention to just some of the many achievements of 2013/14, both big and small, that contributed to a successful year.

- The five-year £65 million investment programme in our housing stock, possible as a result of our move to self-financing, saw improvements get underway to modernise and enhance properties with new kitchens, bathrooms and doors.
- The adoption of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 in autumn 2013 was the culmination of many years' preparation and extensive public involvement.
- A Sustainable Energy Strategy to help reduce carbon emissions for businesses, residents and communities across the Borough was adopted. The Council has already exceeded its aim of reducing greenhouse emissions associated with its operations by at least 25 per cent by 2020, from 2006/07 levels, achieving a reduction of 27% by 2012/13.
- Our strategic partnership arrangement with LCC/One Connect Limited for Revenues & Benefits and ICT services continued. During the year our highly-rated website was migrated onto a new content management system. This gave us the opportunity to give the website a fresh look and apply newer technologies. We are confident that the new site will improve access to services through streamlined content, simplified navigation, and enhanced access for mobile users.
- In October we began the phased rollout of blue wheelie bins to replace blue recycling boxes for plastic, cans and glass with the programme concluding in the first months of the new year.

- Six community facilities underwent *Community Transfer* achieving required savings for the Council. We were delighted that organisations were able to step in to retain these resources for community use. The transfers progressed at different rates, with some concluded earlier in the year. It is anticipated that all transfers will be completed by the end of 2013/14 and will be operated by the following community organisations: Civic Hall (Engine Rooms); Ashurst Meeting Room (Taekwondo Development Council); and the Community Resource Centres of Birch Green (Ashton Artz), Tanhouse (Tanhouse Enterprise Group), Greenhill (Greenhill Management Committee) and Digmoor (Digmoor Management Committee).
- The Expanding the coverage of CCTV project saw thirteen new cameras installed where previously there was no CCTV coverage. A further fourteen were used to enhance existing coverage. Work to bring all cameras into operation continued into 2014.

The highlights above show that despite the squeeze on our finances, we are still delivering positive outcomes over a wide range of service areas. Our most recent information indicates that residents' satisfaction has been maintained in relation to how the Council is running things and whether our services provide value for money. That is not to say that we do not wish to improve on this, but it is of some re-assurance that given the financially-driven changes we are having to make we are not falling out of step with public expectations.

Since its establishment in 1974, the services provided by the Council have undergone substantial changes spear-headed by the use of technology, public-private or public-public partnerships and the transparency of the organisation. Our 40th anniversary will see us continuing to re-shape services, not out of choice but out of necessity, and this situation will stay with us into the foreseeable future. I, and everyone at West Lancashire Borough Council, look forward to rising to the challenge and continuing to deliver affordable services that meet the needs of West Lancashire.

MANAGING DIRECTORS' REPORT

Local government continues to operate within a period of unprecedented change and public sector spending restraint. Councils across the country have had to make tough and often unpopular decisions in order to balance their budgets whilst, as far as they can, protecting services. The medium-term future financial position facing the Council will inevitably involve further significant reductions in government grant funding, with national commentators anticipating this trend will continue until at least 2020.

We believe that in West Lancashire we are responding as positively as we are able to these testing times. The management team continues to plan for the long term, thereby enabling a proactive, managed approach to dealing with the current issues. That approach first led to the development and implementation of this Business Plan which was aimed at improving efficiency, reducing costs and generating income whilst ensuring that as an organisation we focus resources on our priorities. We remain steadfast in our commitment to this strategy which, for the most part, has so far enabled us to continue to provide levels of service far above those required as a result of our statutory duties.

In the last 12 months our senior management team has provided experienced direction and guidance for the organisation at a time when our staff need to feel as secure, engaged and motivated as possible. We aim to ensure that staff are involved and informed about the context in which we are working, the Council's priorities, and any changes that will impact on them.

As Managing Directors, our approach is to drive the delivery of the Business Plan through the senior team – particularly the Major Service Review process, and other key projects, designed to deliver the Council's priorities within a balanced budget. Throughout the year we have also continued with our programme of meeting and holding discussions with as many staff and Councillors as possible, and also with businesses and organisations in the Borough, to discuss their needs and perspectives.

Despite the need to focus on savings, efficiencies and income streams, we are also very open to exploring new opportunities for the Borough for example through working with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and potential opportunities from the Liverpool Superport.

The final year of this Business Plan does not signal the end to the financial focus. These considerations have been at the forefront of our preliminary work on the 2015-18 strategy. The local government finance settlement, announced in December 2013, confirmed the necessity of this continued emphasis, with further significant net cost reductions having to be found in order to balance the General Revenue Account.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is the other main funding source for the Council. A self-financing model for housing was implemented in April 2012 with the Council taking on a one-off debt of £88.2million but retaining all future rental income. Since the debt repayments are less than the Government subsidy payments required under the previous housing financial regime, the HRA is in an improved financial position. This has allowed expanded investment in the Housing Service and is already yielding significant results. It is anticipated that by the close of the 2013/14 financial year 1,414 homes will have received replacement kitchens and 1,220 homes new bathrooms.

We would like to thank staff for their fantastic efforts over the past year, particularly given the continued period of uncertainty within local government. Their drive and commitment is vital when making a difference for our service users. Our strength as a Council is our capacity to work together effectively, as one Council, resulting in "Team West Lancashire - making a difference." As Managing Directors, we will continue to emphasise:

- a strong corporate focus;
- caring about and involving staff;
- giving committed professional leadership; and
- providing the best possible services within the resources available – the wellbeing of West Lancashire is paramount.

We are confident that for the next twelve months we have the right team and the right Plan in place to ensure we remain a Council to be proud of.



Managing Directors

Kim Webber



Gill Rowe

VISION, VALUES AND PRIORITIES

The Council's vision is:

To be a Council to be proud of – delivering services that are lean, local and fair.

The Council's values are:

We will deliver our vision by continuing to be an innovative organisation which:

- prioritises customers and the services that are most important to quality of life;
- works as 'one council' to provide a joined up approach;
- is open and accountable in the way that it makes decisions;
- develops and values employees;
- promotes equality and diversity; and

- works in partnership to benefit the borough.

Our values underpin the way in which we will deliver our priorities and achieve our vision.

Our Corporate Priorities are:

- balancing the budget and providing the best possible services within the resources available;
- focussing upon sustainable regeneration and growth within the borough;
- caring for our borough by delivering the small improvements that can make a big difference.

(We will minimise uncertainty for staff and stakeholders by continuing to implement a managed approach to change and explore innovation as a means to secure further value for money.)

Our services will continue to prioritise the following, subject to affordability:

- Protect and improve the environment and keep our streets clean and tidy;
- Combat crime and the fear of crime;
- Work to create opportunities for and retain good quality jobs in particular for local people;
- To be a top performing landlord;
- Improve housing and deliver housing that meets the needs of local people, including affordable housing; and
- Provide opportunities for leisure and culture that together with other Council services contribute to healthier communities.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The Council has a good track record of effective financial management and currently has a healthy financial position. Our latest Audit Findings report from our External Auditors concludes that:

“The Council's track record in managing its financial position given the scale of funding reductions to date has been good.

The programme of major service reviews undertaken in recent years has provided a solid framework from which detailed savings plans have been identified and delivered.”

Our external auditors have also confirmed that the Council has proper arrangements in place to secure our financial resilience and for challenging how we secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

This strong financial position can also be demonstrated by the fact that:

- Over the last 12 years we have had the lowest cumulative Council Tax increase out of all the Lancashire district authorities
- Our latest budget forecasts show that we are on course to meet our financial targets for this year and that we should achieve a favourable budget variance at the year end

Looking to the future, the financial prospects for the Council continue to be challenging. Our Government grant funding is expected to reduce by a further £1m in 2015-16, with additional reductions then expected in each of the following 2 years.

A new business plan is being developed to cover this three year period, 2015-18, which will set out how we will deal with this challenge in an effective and well managed manner.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

The Council's senior management team has remained in place throughout the year providing consistent management stability and focus to deliver this Business Plan. We continue to consider the appropriateness of staffing structures within services. In particular, Sheltered Housing and the Planning service were reviewed during the year, achieving both service improvements and reduction in costs.

Organisational structures are illustrated on the following pages.

CABINET MEMBERS & PORTFOLIOS



Leader of the Council

Councillor Ian Grant

Chairman of the Cabinet; community leadership; shared services/partnership contracts; Customer Relations; ICT & Exchequer Services; Legal & Democratic Services; FOI, Press & Media Strategy; Consultation & Community Engagement Strategy; Sustainable Community Strategy; management issues; corporate procurement; town twinning; liaison with County Council & Parish Councils. Street scene: fleet/garage/depot facilities, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, stores. Waste disposal & recycling: waste management, including through partnership; domestic & trade refuse service, green waste & recyclables collection, farm round.



Housing (Finance), Regeneration & Estates

Councillor Adrian Owens
(Deputy Leader)

Regeneration: external funding & inward investment; marketing the authority & borough; grants & training advice to businesses. Housing finance: self-financing business plan; corporate & commercial property portfolio management/maintenance; Asset Management Plan; Asset Register & Land Terrier; acquisition/sale of land; valuation advice; rating appeals; European Objective 2 Priority 2 funding; Investing in Business Regeneration Programme.



Planning & Development

Councillor Martin Forshaw

Planning policy; Local Development Framework; development control; building control & enforcement; Borough town centre development; Skelmersdale Vision; conservation of built & natural environment; arboricultural & landscape services; council-owned unadopted footways, highways & grit bins; liaison with utility companies/Highway Authority for highway works & transportation issues; off-street public car parking & enforcement; Ormskirk market & bus station; land drainage & coastal engineering; 'green' issues including the Council's own activities.



Health, Leisure & Community Safety

Councillor David Sudworth

Commercial safety: health promotion, food safety, health & safety enforcement. Public protection & licensing: licensing taxis, public entertainment, charities etc; dog & pest control; animal welfare. Environmental protection: pollution control, fly-tipping. Emergency planning/business continuity. Leisure Trust & Serco contracts; sports development, swimming pools, sports centres; playgrounds & community centres; arts development, Chapel Gallery; countryside service including golf course, formal parks, open spaces, rights of way & environmental improvements; outdoor recreation; children's services; voluntary sector grants. Community Safety: Community Safety Partnership; CCTV.



Resources & Transformation

Councillor David Westley

Accounting services; capital and revenue estimates and budgeting; annual statement of accounts; treasury management; internal audit; risk management & insurance; data quality; value for money; major service reviews; organisational re-engineering; corporate planning; performance management.

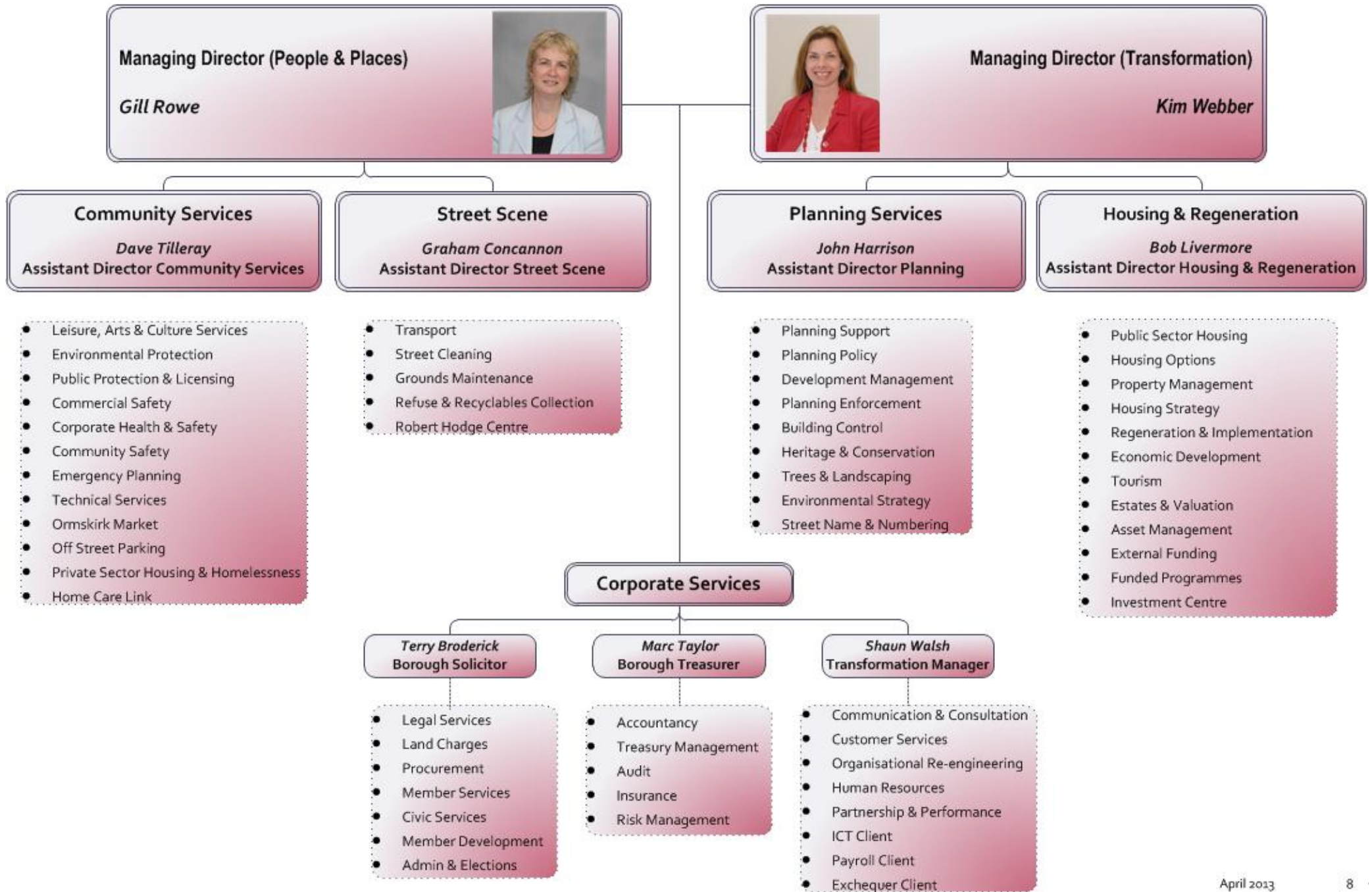


Landlord Services & Human Resources

Councillor Val Hopley

Public sector housing: repairs & maintenance, housing allocations, tenancy management, former tenant arrears, sheltered housing & tenant empowerment/participation. Private sector housing: renovation and disabled facilities grants, home energy efficiency; unfit homes; housing strategy; housing advice service; Supporting People Initiative. HR: corporate & strategic HR issues, strategy, policies & procedures; social inclusion, equality & diversity, cohesive & integrated local communities; council representative at NWLAEO meetings; council JCC; equality champion; employee development champion; health & safety champion.

SENIOR OFFICER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



CORE FUNCTIONS

West Lancashire is served by a County Council, Borough Council, 20 Parish Councils and one Parish Meeting.

Main services provided by Lancashire County Council (LCC)

LCC is responsible for providing many of the services in the borough. Around 73% of the council tax collected in West Lancashire is spent on services that the County Council delivers.

Children and Young People

Incorporates the County Council's statutory role as a Children's Services Authority with a duty to promote co-operation and wellbeing of children and young people; make arrangements to safeguard and promote welfare; and prepare and publish a strategic plan setting out how services for children and young people will be provided.

The functions also include the County Council's powers and duties in relation to schools, including: access and school transport; school improvement and tackling failure; special educational needs; school attendance; and educating excluded pupils and pupil welfare.

Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing

Responsible for assessing the needs of vulnerable adults and their carers and securing the provision of social care services to meet these needs in line with the County Council's criteria. Also responsible for public health, adult learning, county libraries, arts development, county museums, record office, welfare rights, coroners' and registrars' services.

Environment

Responsible for the County Council's duties and policies as Highway Authority and Planning Authority; for waste disposal, sustainable development, tourism, countryside services and the Lancashire Highways Service including highway maintenance services to the County Council and providing a grounds maintenance service to County Council property. Also responsible for the Trading Standards Service and the County Analyst's Laboratory.

Lancashire County Commercial Group

Responsible for servicing County Council and other public service vehicles; cleaning County Council buildings; providing a catering service; providing a school crossing patrol service and providing a range of residential care services in County Council homes for the elderly, together with day care and home care services.

Main services provided by West Lancashire Borough Council

Around 12% of the council tax collected in West Lancashire is spent on services delivered by the Borough Council.

Planning Services

Responsible for all planning applications, building regulations and enforcement, as well as conservation, heritage, tree protection, planning policy and street name and numbering.

Housing & Regeneration

Responsible for providing social and affordable housing, and providing housing advice services. The service manages its housing stock, the Council property portfolio and a large commercial portfolio. In addition, the function also undertakes the principle work of the Council in relation to creating jobs and bringing investment into the borough.

Community Services

Responsible for environmental health (including dog and pest control, food safety, health promotion, health and safety, public health and pollution control); Community safety (including CCTV) and funding contributions for Police Community Support Officers; flood defences, shoreline management and methane monitoring; public protection and licensing; private sector housing and homelessness; Ormskirk market and off-street parking.

Also responsible for country parks, the ranger service, sports pitches, playgrounds, parks and Chapel Gallery. Our pools and sports centres are run by West Lancashire Community Leisure Trust.

Street Scene

Responsible for the collection of waste and recycling from homes and cleaning all streets except the major highways. Also responsible for grass cutting and grounds maintenance (of open spaces, parks and roadside verges).

Revenues and Benefits

West Lancashire Borough Council collects council tax and business rates that is spent by the Borough Council, LCC, the Police and Fire Authority and Parish Councils. LCC/BT manages the collection on behalf of the Council. In addition, housing benefits and council tax benefits are also managed by LCC/BT on behalf of the Council.

The Council also provides some services on behalf of LCC. These arrangements have been put in place in areas where devolving management and resources locally has provided a more efficient service, for example the Public Realm partnership with LCC whereby we deliver verge cutting and hedge trimming within our borough.

Main services provided by Parish Councils

West Lancashire has 20 Parish Councils and one parish meeting. These cover the entire borough except for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale. Parish Councils are financed by raising a small council tax on all residential properties within a parish.

Parish Councils are a key tier of local government and provide a way of making sure services meet the needs of residents by influencing decisions that affect local people.

Parish Councils' powers include: the provision of facilities (such as allotments, leisure, bus shelters, litter bins, car parks, community centres, parks and open spaces); representation (e.g. planning applications); and wellbeing (to spend on any activity which adds to the wellbeing of its community).

West Lancashire Borough Council and (signatory) Parish Councils established a Charter setting out how the Borough and Parish Councils will

work together, whilst balancing the needs of the wider West Lancashire community and recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected, statutory bodies.





KEY ACTIVITIES

Workstreams

Actions within the Business Plan are aligned directly to the Council's priorities to provide a framework for the delivery of our vision. Previous projects that have concluded or not progressed into 2014-15 will be detailed in the Annual Report. Outlines of the actions for the forthcoming year are given below.

Balancing the budget and providing the best possible services within the resources available

Actions 2014-15

-  HRA Self-financing Business Plan
-  Major Service Reviews
-  Organisational Re-engineering
-  Strategic Asset Management Plan

In addition to the projects above, Council agreed further options for savings in 2014/15 with no impact on service delivery, for example changes to internal budgets and organisational arrangements. Additional measures included a reduced level of food safety and health promotion work and the introduction of a charging policy for replacement refuse/recycling receptacles.

As part of a planned approach, it is anticipated that up to £300,000 will be utilised from the Budget and Efficiency Savings Reserve to support the overall budget position in 2014-15. This use of reserves is appropriate in the context of the Council's medium-term financial position and will support the implementation of business plan measures through a managed process.

The coming year will see significant upgrades to the Council's ICT infrastructure providing opportunities for further service developments. These improvements will ensure that our systems are both robust and resilient as we move forward and that we are in a position to take advantage of up to date software platforms via the partnership with LCC and BT.

The HRA *Self-Financing Business Plan* has facilitated significant investment in our housing assets, to ensure their future viability. The 2014/15 financial year of the 30-year plan will see a £13.9m investment programme in housing stock with improvements benefitting a substantial number of the Council's 6,200 properties. In addition, there is benefit to the local area through environmental enhancements.

Our successful *Major Service Review Programme* (MSR) examines every aspect of the Council's business to develop options for alternative forms of service delivery to assist in ensuring a balanced budget. It includes streamlining services and prioritising their affordability and desirability. We have now delivered and implemented three years of the Major Service Review process and cumulatively this has achieved savings of £2.5m.

MSR has been the key vehicle for delivering the necessary savings and efficiencies during the lifetime of the Business Plan. It is however increasingly difficult to identify options that offer the level of savings needed without impacting upon service delivery. The effectiveness of MSR coupled with the ongoing financial limitations facing the Council mean that a similar style of review will be carried out during this financial year for 2015/16.








Reviewing services also provides the information to form a strategic and targeted approach to *Organisational Re-engineering (OR)*. This is then applied to the parts of our organisation where this programme can deliver savings through efficiencies, whilst also considering improving service delivery and customer accessibility. In 2013/14 an OR review of the Planning Service was completed and a commencement made on

implementing the identified project outcomes. Reviews of Landlord Services and Legal & Democratic Services were begun in 2013/14 and these will be concluded in 2014/15. During the year, a further area(s) will be selected and initial work carried out.

Work continues on the strategic review of our asset holding (the *Strategic Asset Management Plan*), with a view to prioritising these assets for retention, improvement or disposal thereby providing a useful income stream and resources for future capital projects. The plan provides a framework to create a focused and sustainable property portfolio for the future. During the forthcoming year, the Council will continue to identify sites and either bring them to market for development or, where appropriate, seek an alternative use to meet local needs.

Focussing upon sustainable regeneration and growth within the Borough

Actions 2014-15

-  Skelmersdale Vision
-  Firbeck Revival
-  Land Auctions Pilot
-  Infrastructure Delivery – Transport
-  Remodelling Industrial Estates
-  Economic Development Strategy
-  Financial Inclusion Strategy

The *Skelmersdale Vision* Town Centre Action Plan is a project in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, LCC and St Modwen. It seeks to secure regeneration in the form of new commercial, leisure and residential development alongside existing property and environmental enhancements across a large area of land within and surrounding the town centre. Key areas of work during the year included the marketing of two parcels of land

for residential development which in the past have not generated developer interest. Additionally, a £2m investment from LCC was secured for the construction of a Youth Zone facility within the town centre. Work on the Youth Zone is scheduled to commence early in 2014 and to be completed by the end of the year. Periodic marketing of the approved retail/leisure scheme site will continue as the economy recovers, whilst other possible options which might deliver the key leisure elements of the approved scheme will be explored. We will also continue to engage with partners such as West Lancashire College and the owners of the Concourse to see how we might assist them in their future investment plans for their sites, both of which are key land uses within the town centre.

The *Firbeck Revival* initiative is a £5.5 million improvement programme for the Firbeck estate (Skelmersdale). The phased scheme broadly covers home improvements to Council properties (kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, roofs and external wall insulation), and external improvements to privately owned properties (new roofs and external wall insulation, and new windows/doors if not already done); demolition of flats (excluding Firbeck Court) as well as property construction and redevelopment of the street scene. During 2013/14, extensive work on the scheme included the installation of new kitchens and bathrooms in all houses in Firbeck. Work was completed to re-house residents from the blocks of flats listed for demolition and these are planned to be brought down towards the end of the financial year. Eight Council owned-properties underwent external improvements to demonstrate what the estate could look like. Key actions for the forthcoming year (2014/15) includes completion of the improvements to housing stock and responding to a consultation with residents by building replacement homes on the sites of the demolished flats. We will also be making improvements to the street scene including communal gardens, garages and parking areas.

A government grant is being used to carry out the works required to progress a *Land Auctions Pilot* involving the Homes & Communities Agency and the Council. The pilot project tests the land disposal elements of a proposed national Community Land Auction model. The pilot was initiated in 2012 and will last for a period of two years, during which time

development sites will be brought forward which meet the objectives of the Local Plan. It is anticipated that the sale of at least part of the land will take place in 2014, with remaining sites being sold over several years. Dependant upon which site(s) are selected, there is the potential for a significant sum of money to be raised which can then be used, through the Capital Programme, to invest in the priorities of the Council.

Although not a statutory function of the Council, engaging with partners to improve the infrastructure of the local area means that West Lancashire becomes more appealing to investors and developers. *Infrastructure Delivery* will focus on assisting improvements in transport. We will also benefit from the rollout of the superfast broadband for the area that will ultimately support the wider success of the Council's priorities. Forthcoming work for 2014 will progress the feasibility studies of the Skelmersdale rail link and supporting LCC in the delivery of the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Master Plan.

Some sections of the borough's industrial estates were built 20 - 30 years ago and will therefore benefit from a modernisation programme. The *Remodelling Industrial Estates* plan will support the economy of the borough by enhancing estates and continue to make West Lancashire an attractive option for industry. A staged progression may utilise reserves for the initial improvement works. Following the successful marketing of them, and subject to the necessary approvals the income from new businesses will be used for further work on other estates.

Working with key partners, a draft *Economic Development Strategy* will be developed for consultation. The 10-year strategy will guide the Council and partners in the regeneration of our existing urban areas and support general economic wellbeing. It will assist with the provision of sustainable jobs and growth and improve the skills and training development of the borough's workforce thereby helping access to job opportunities. Additionally, the strategy will influence the development of sub regional economic strategy and provide a focus for bids for national and European funding.

With partners, we are working to minimise the impact of Welfare Reform on affected households in the borough through a *Financial Inclusion Strategy*. Some changes have already been implemented, but other reforms are still being rolled out throughout the country. We aim to support residents and tenants affected by the reforms as far as we are able through a range of initiatives including increasing financial inclusion and improving pathways to employment and training.

Caring for our Borough by delivering the small improvements that can make a big difference

Actions 2014-15

-  Housing Asset Management Plan
-  Moor Street
-  Local environmental improvements
-  Public Realm
-  Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy

The *Housing Asset Management Plan* (formerly Housing Improvement Programme) is another significant project being carried out within the Council's housing service. The five-year investment scheme will see through a programme of work to modernise and enhance the Council's housing stock. The first year saw record investment to modernise the stock. An additional £12m of expenditure is planned for year 2 (2014/15). A programme of option appraisals has commenced to ensure the long term sustainability of our stock and a robust business plan.

As part of a major project to improve Ormskirk's *Moor Street*, which is being carried out in partnership with LCC, re-paving of the existing carriageway surface will take place as well as other environmental improvement works in the street. Initial options appraisals for the scheme were completed and have been discussed with LCC prior to public

consultation in advance of the plans being finalised. The scheme remains a priority for the Council.

Local Environmental Improvements are addressed through a specific budget of £90,000 in 2013/14, and we hope to continue this work in 2014/15. The budget is used throughout the borough, for example on street furniture, signage and the maintenance and replacement of litter and dog waste bin. We will be developing a prioritised programme of improvements for the year, including the continued cleaning of war memorials to coincide with the outbreak of World War I centenary events. The Council also engages with Network Rail to facilitate the improved appearance of land, for example that covered with brambles.

In addition to the project above, Tenants' groups or individual tenants can propose small improvements for tenant areas, for example parking or gardens, and these are undertaken throughout the year via a dedicated budget.

The *Public Realm Street Services Agreement* with the Highways Authority (LCC) allows us to deliver services such as residents parking schemes, work on the highways relating to grass cutting of verges and roundabouts, weed control, management and maintenance of trees and leaf removal to agreed standards on their behalf.

An *Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy* will be developed to provide a clear, strategic direction and initiatives that will ensure Ormskirk operates as an attractive and bustling market town into the future. The strategy will have regard to competition from other shopping centres and the internet as well as issues such as car parking, heritage and environment, technology and marketing, the market and the leisure and night time economy. Working with key partners, a draft strategy will be produced for consultation ahead of adoption.

BUDGET STRATEGY

The Council has implemented permanent ongoing savings of £4.53m over the first three years of the Business Plan period. These savings have been designed to minimise the impact on service quality and have been achieved through partnership working with other local authorities, improved efficiency, reprioritisation of service delivery, transferring assets to community groups, and targeted increases in fees and charges and other income.

The total savings required over the four year business plan period have recently been reviewed and updated to take account of the latest available information. The latest estimate of £5.55m reflects the difference between the resources that are expected to be available to the Council and the level of spending that would be required to maintain agreed service levels.

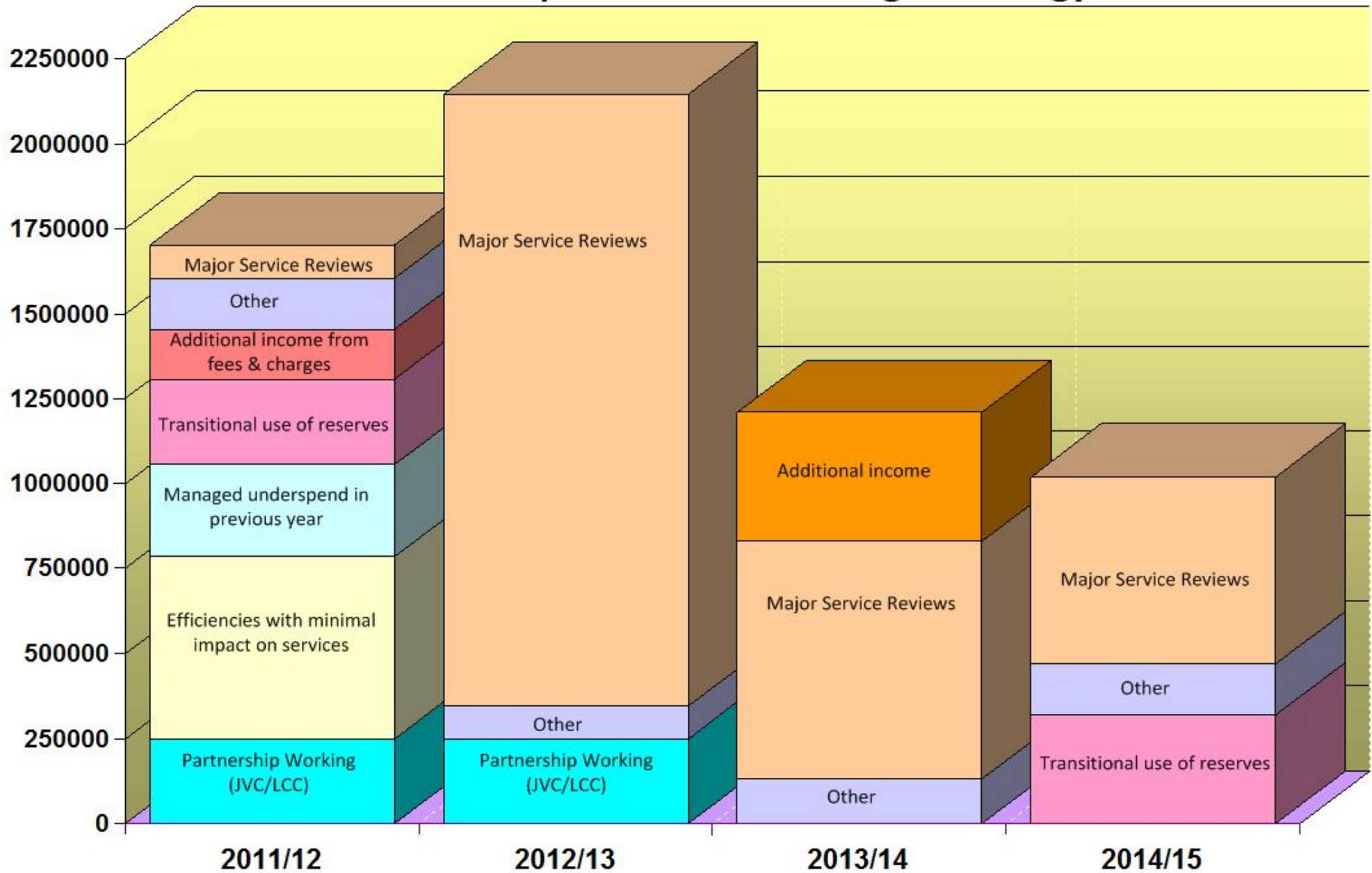
The difference between the savings required and those already delivered is just over £1m, and this represents the savings target for 2014-15. The Major Service Review programme and other initiatives will deliver savings of around £0.7m next year, which leaves a balance of £0.3m that will be funded from reserves. This is an acceptable use of reserves in the context of the Council's medium term financial position, given that the Business Plan for 2015-18 will replace this temporary reserve funding with permanent ongoing savings.

In overall terms this means that the Council will have delivered 95% of the total savings required over the 2011-15 period. The balance of 5% (equivalent to the £0.3m use of reserves in 2014-15) will be slipped forward into the next business plan period for 2015-18.

This financial forecast is based on a number of assumptions and has been calculated on a prudent but not worst case scenario. However due to the inherent uncertainties involved with this type of financial projection there is scope for variance from the forecast, although as this is the last year of the current business plan period, the scope for variation is significantly reduced compared to previous years.

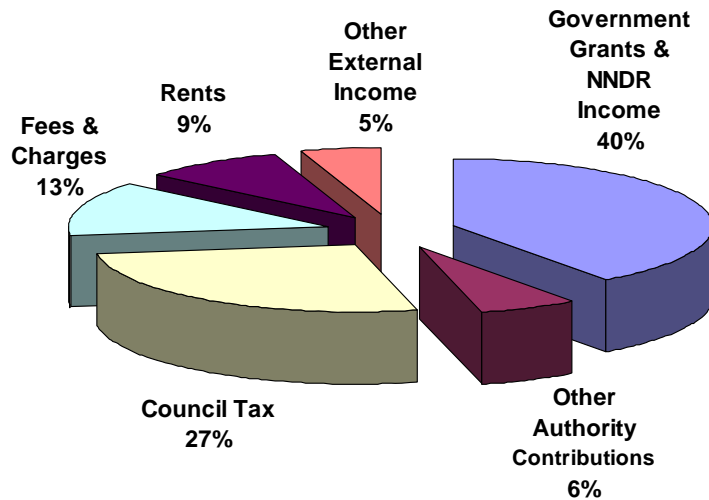
A graphical representation of the budget strategy is shown below.

Representation of Budget Strategy

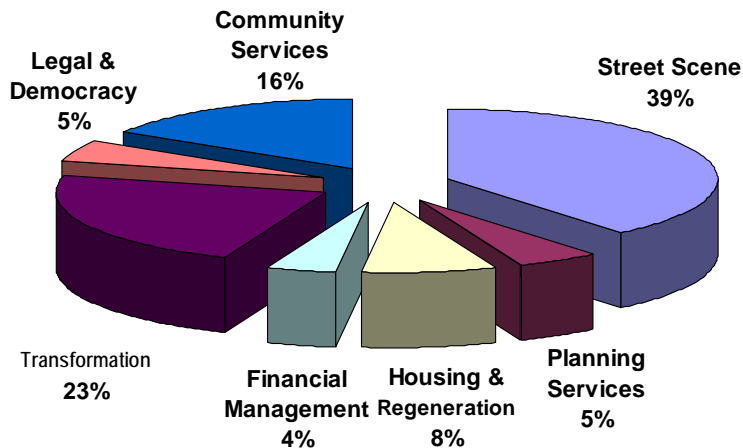


RESOURCE BUDGETING AND STAFFING

The Council's 2013/14 income was made up as follows



In 2013/14, the budget was spent as follows



Staffing

The Council is committed to ensuring staffing levels are appropriate to deliver services to agreed standards. In the current financial climate it is anticipated that the workforce will continue to reduce in size during the Business Plan period and beyond. The Council values its employees and from January 2014 a pay supplement was introduced to achieve the nationally-recognised Living Wage for the lowest-paid workers.

To manage staffing levels effectively and sensitively, the Council will continue to monitor the use of recruitment appropriately. This will ensure there is an adequate balance between maintaining an effective workforce supply and preserving potential redeployment opportunities for staff that may be displaced, through the judicious use of temporary recruitment to coordinate with the requirements of the MSR process. The Council will continue to seek to minimise compulsory redundancies as far as possible and arrive at change through voluntary measures wherever feasible.

A Graduate Recruitment Scheme was established within the Council during 2013 and one graduate was employed on a two year contract. Additional work is being carried out to facilitate work experience placements for University and College students. To accompany the work undertaken by the Regeneration Service in the West Lancashire Challenge and apprenticeships, work is also taking place on the implementation of an apprenticeship scheme.

CONSULTATION AND EQUALITIES

The Council has a duty to consult and involve representatives of local persons and others, where appropriate in the exercise of its functions.

In summary, this covers:

- The common law requirement for fair consultation, e.g. consultation needs to be undertaken when matters are at a formative stage and must be consistent with existing policies on consultation in particular functions.
- Responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act, which requires the Council to demonstrate that it has paid due regard to equality issues across its services and functions.
- The general 'Duty to Consult' (Section 3A of the Local Government Act 1999) which requires that in relation to its duty to secure best value an authority shall where it considers it appropriate consult representatives of people who pay council tax and NNDR, service users and others with an interest in the area. The duty specifies three ways of involving that need to be considered, viz providing information, consulting or involving in another way.
- The Best Value Statutory Guidance (September 2011) sets out expectations for councils in relation to the duty to consult, including where they are considering difficult financial decisions. The guidance, which councils must have regard to, requires councils to give at least three months' notice of funding reductions to voluntary or community organisations or small businesses; to engage organisations and service users as early as possible before making a decision on the future of a service; and make provision for organisations, service users and the wider community to put forward options on how to reshape the service or project.
- Particular statutory duties of consultation for specific matters, e.g. in relation to disposal of open space or highway matters (which supplant the more general Duty to Consult).

MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES

Business Plan Monitoring

Performance and progress against the four-year Business Plan is reported annually to the Council and the public in the form of an Annual Report.

Programme/Project Monitoring

In addition, Members receive regular reports regarding progress against the actions. This enables any issues to be identified at the earliest opportunity.

A Head of Service is identified as the 'lead officer' for each of the projects. Lead officers will regularly monitor progress and performance against their projects, and report any issues to the Senior Management Team by exception.

Risk Management

The actions of the Plan aimed at the delivery of our vision will be entered onto service risk registers. Those projects with high risk and high impact will be entered onto the Key Risk Register.

Cabinet receives reports against the Key Risk Register which are available for call-in through the Overview and Scrutiny process.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you require any further information, or copies of this document in alternative formats, please contact:

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