



Business Plan 2011-2015

2013/14 Refresh

Council 27th February 2013

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LEADER'S STATEMENT

This is an exciting but 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 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 this position is potentially intensified by a reduced income in a number of areas due to the general economic climate. This has meant that the Council needs to achieve savings of around 30% over the period 2011-2015. To balance the Council's budget in this environment means constant, managed change. Doing nothing is not an option. Since the implementation of this Business Plan to guide the Council through this period of change, we have made significant inroads and identified £4.9 million of permanent savings towards the £5.7 million we anticipate is required.

Good progress on achieving our savings in 2011/12 and 2012/13 has already been made. 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 2013/14 and 2014/15. This means that, once again, we anticipate being able to deliver our services on budget, whilst minimising the impact for customers on the standard and range of service that they receive from their Borough Council. Sustaining this beyond 2013/14 will continue to be tough. Our aspiration is to maintain performance and the range of services that we provide, but reductions in some areas are 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 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 use of reserves to allow time to produce results. 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 focused 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. An example of this is the proposed community transfers for the Civic Hall, Community Resource Centres and Ashurst Meeting Room. 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 set 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

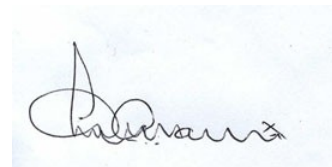
contraction is likely. In making these changes, we will unashamedly seek to minimise compulsory redundancy amongst staff where possible as this is better for the tax payer, for staff and for the local economy.

Although this document is our plan for the future, I would like to recognise just some of the many achievements of 2012/13, both big and small, that contributed to a successful year.

- The work behind the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document concluded in October 2012. The Plan underpins future development within the borough for the next 15 years. Following an extensive consultation process, the Council submitted the Plan to the Secretary of State. It is anticipated that if the plan is considered to be sound it will be adopted in summer 2013.
- Having successfully moved to self-financing for Council housing, we began to invest £8m for 2012/13 in our housing stock, including the replacement of windows and doors in 1,200 homes.
- We continued the successful strategic partnership arrangement with Lancashire County Council and their joint venture company, One Connect Limited. The ten-year contract saves £500,000 per year. It provides fresh thinking, additional expertise and access to technological solutions that have introduced major investment and innovation in the delivery of Revenues & Benefits and ICT services to deliver the best possible service for the people of West Lancashire. In addition it has brought jobs and investment to the area.
- Following receipt of a £100,000 one-off government High Street Innovation Fund, the Council has worked with the Love Ormskirk team and the Skelmersdale Concourse Management to develop schemes to encourage empty shop units to be brought back into use and provide support for the town centres.
- West Lancashire Borough Council and the Environment Agency undertook a £2million flood alleviation project at Calico Brook (Appley Bridge) and Dock Brook (Parbold). The drainage schemes reduced the flood risk for both village communities.

- Council vehicle fleet, plant and equipment is now provided and maintained by May Gurney Ltd, through our existing workshop facilities at the Robert Hodge Centre. This resulted in a new vehicle fleet bearing the refreshed corporate branding taking to our roads from September.
- Refurbishment of the Council's main offices at 52 Derby Street was completed and created a much improved working environment for staff and welcome to visitors and the public.
- Beacon Country Park retained the Green Flag award and we extended our partnership with West Lancashire Leisure Trust to include the operation of Beacon Park Golf Course.
- Environmental works were carried out on 13 benches in Skelmersdale town centre as part of a new commitment to invest £50,000 in 2012/13 in small projects that make a big difference. The benches are in the plaza close to the Concourse, the police station, library and Nye Bevan swimming pool.
- In addition, during the year we entered into an agreement with Wigan Council for the provision of a Managed Payroll Service and restructured our Human Resources service which will save £50,000 per year.

Despite the financial challenges, the highlights above show that we have been able to make improvements over a wide range of service areas. It is clear that these challenges will remain into the foreseeable future. However, I and everyone at West Lancashire Borough Council, look forward to meeting them and continuing to deliver the services that West Lancashire deserves.



Councillor Ian Grant

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 2018.

We believe that in West Lancashire we are responding positively 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.

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 over the last year has been 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 focused on meeting and holding discussions with as many staff and Councillors as possible, and on meeting with businesses and organisations in the Borough, to discuss their needs and perspectives.

We would like to thank staff for their fantastic efforts over the past year. Our strength as a council is our capacity to work together effectively, as one council, resulting in a "Team West Lancashire" approach. As Joint 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.



Joint 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;
- work 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 Annual Governance Report from our External Auditors concludes that:

“the leadership team continues to take appropriate action to maintain a stable and sustainable financial position. The medium term financial plan identifies the challenges and articulates a cohesive response. The Council’s recent track record, achieving favourable variances against budget in 2010/11 and 2011/12 indicates that the savings plans and strategies have been proportionate and reasonable.”

This letter also identifies that:

“The Council has a strong financial standing, with a good level of general fund reserves [...] However, the medium term financial plan and underlying service reviews indicate that the Council is not complacent and continues to seek sustainable long term solutions”.

This strong financial position can also be demonstrated by the fact that over the last 11 years we have had the lowest cumulative Council Tax increase of all the Lancashire district authorities.

However, looking to the future, the financial prospects for the Council continue to be challenging. Government grant funding has already reduced significantly and will reduce further in future years. At the same time, income from other sources is also depressed as a result of the difficult economic climate.

This financial position represents a massive challenge for the Council and the business planning process sets out how we will deal with this situation 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 have continued to review structures within services, in particular Human Resources and Housing & Regeneration, to achieve both service improvements and reduction in costs.

The Leader of the Council made refinements to Cabinet portfolios during the year and reduced the number of cabinet members from seven to six.

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; Local Strategic Partnership; 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 (and Deputy Leader)

Councillor Adrian Owens

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.

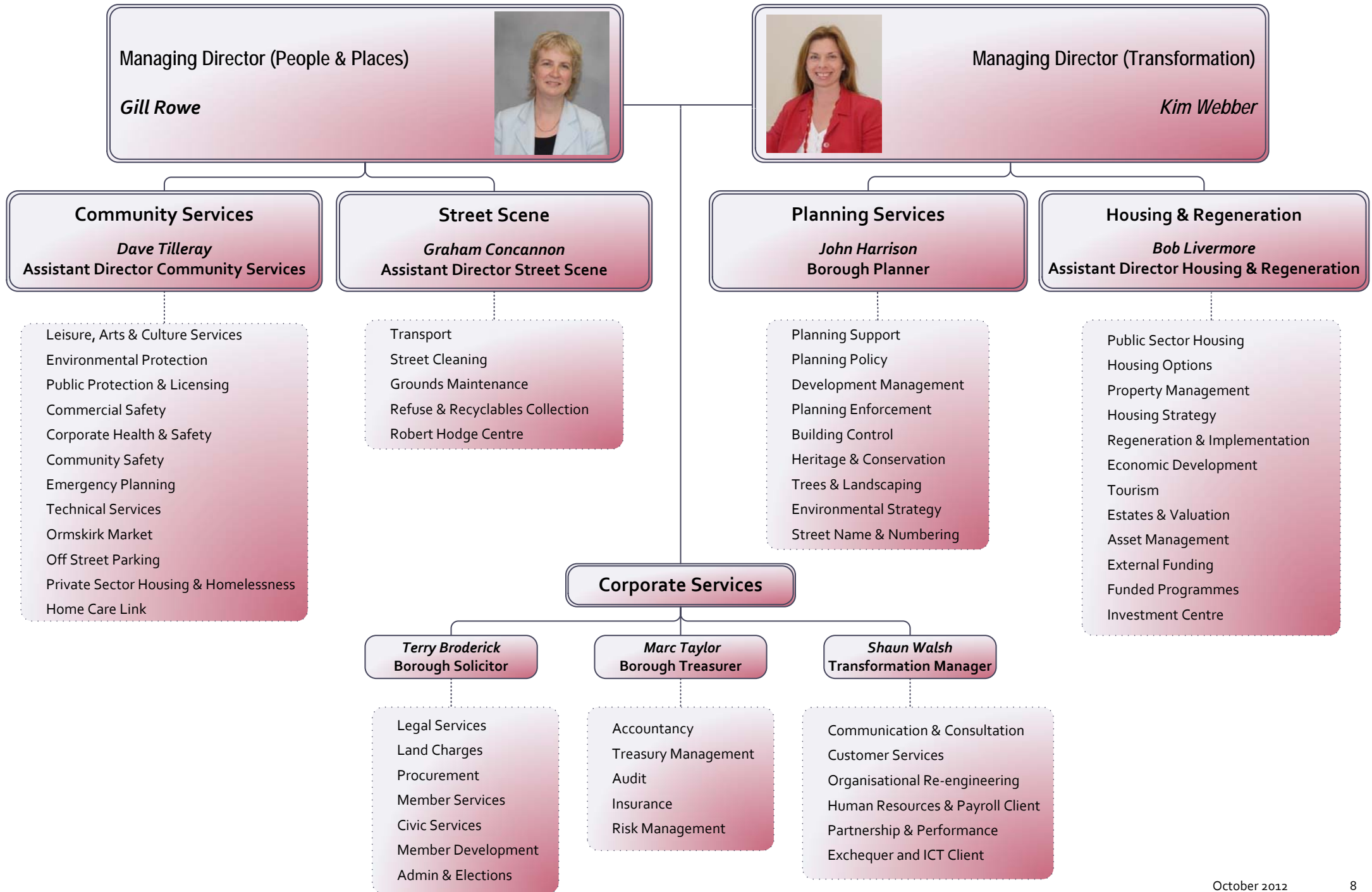


Landlord Services & Human Resources

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

Lancashire County Council 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 and Community Services

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 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

Planning Services

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

Housing & Regeneration

Responsible for providing affordable housing, and providing housing advice services for people who are homeless. 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 control, 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.

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, Lancashire County Council, the Police and Fire Authority and Parish Councils. One Connect Limited manages the collection on behalf of the Council. In addition, housing benefits and council tax benefits are also managed by One Connect Limited on behalf of the Council.

The Council also provides some services on behalf of Lancashire County Council. 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 Lancashire County Council 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 all of the borough except for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale. Parish Councils are financed by raising a small levy 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); 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

In refreshing the Business Plan for 2013/14 actions were aligned directly to the Council's priorities to provide a framework for the delivery of our vision. An outline of the actions for the forthcoming year are outlined below.

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

Actions 2013-14

-  Major Service Reviews
-  Organisational Re-engineering
-  Strategic Asset Management Plan
-  Community Transfer of Facilities

In addition to the projects above, Council agreed further measures for savings in 2013/14 for example through externalising the dog warden service, extending car parking charges and reducing some grants/funding, as well as changes to internal budgets and organisational arrangements with no impact on service delivery.

Our successful *Major Service Review Programme* (MSR) examines every aspect of the Council's business to develop options for alternative forms of service delivery. It includes streamlining services and prioritising their affordability and desirability. We have now delivered and implemented years one and two of the Major Service Review process to assist in ensuring a balanced budget and cumulatively this has achieved savings of £2.55m, with around a further £0.35m already established for 2014/15.

Due to its continuing effectiveness, the method will be used as the key vehicle for delivering the necessary savings and balancing the Council's budget for the lifetime of the Business Plan. It is difficult to accurately

predict the budget gap for future years, but a further MSR round will be conducted in 2013/14 in order to arrive at further policy options to be considered in 2014/15. It is however increasingly difficult to identify options that offer the level of savings needed without impacting upon service delivery.

Reviewing services also provides the information to form a strategic and targetted approach to *Organisational Re-engineering (OR)*. This is then applied to the parts of our organisation where this programme can deliver savings, whilst also considering improving service delivery and customer accessibility. There have been eight successful OR projects to date. In 2012/13 outcomes from projects were implemented in Environmental Health, Private Sector Housing and Sheltered Housing. In addition, a review of Planning Services was undertaken. Landlord Services will be a new area for re-engineering in 2013/14.








The Council aims to save around £200K through introducing a new model of *Community Transfer* for the Civic Hall (Ormskirk), Community Resource Centres (Tanhouse, Birch Green, Digmaor, and Greenhill) and Ashurst Meeting Room.

These facilities play an important role in bringing local communities together, offering a focal point for neighbourhood activities and a base for local groups. Early discussions with community groups around the potential for transfer initially sought transfer of the Community Resource Centres to existing management committees either in partnership with other groups or in an umbrella support arrangement. Notifications for expressions of interest in the community transfer of all the facilities have been published.

We are currently undertaking a strategic review of our asset holding (the *Strategic Asset Management Plan*), with a view to prioritising these assets for retention, improvement or disposal and this will provide 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 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 2013-14

-  Skelmersdale Vision
-  Firbeck Revival
-  Land Auctions Pilot
-  Empty Homes Initiative
-  Infrastructure Delivery – Transport & Broadband
-  Remodelling Industrial Estates
-  Promoting Apprenticeships

The *Skelmersdale Vision* Town Centre Action Plan has continued to make progress in partnership with the Homes and Community Agency and St Modwen. During the year, the Council resolved to grant outline planning permission for a mixed use development including a foodstore, cinema, restaurants, mixed commercial uses, petrol filling station, car park and youth zone along with new public realm and children's play area. Following this, work around marketing the scheme will be undertaken during 2013/14.

In early 2012, the *Firbeck Revival* initiative was approved and proposals taken forward for consultation with residents. The Skelmersdale-based project will deliver improvement to the Firbeck estate through a phased scheme that broadly covers home improvements, demolition of flats (excluding Firbeck Court) as well as property construction and redevelopment of the street scene. Initial work on this extensive project concentrated on providing energy efficiency measures to homes, as prioritised by residents during the consultation process.

Key actions for 2013/14 include re-housing residents from properties listed for demolition, installing new kitchens and bathrooms on the remaining

council-owned housing, and preparing a redevelopment brief for the construction of new properties. Demolition of the 3 storey flats will be carried out following the re-housing of the occupants. Residents will also be invited to take part in consultation regarding proposals for street scene improvements.

A government grant of £100K has been received and will be used to carry out the works required to progress a *Land Auctions Pilot* involving the Homes and Communities Agency and the Council. The pilot project tests the land disposal elements of a proposed national Community Land Auction model, which could potentially replace the current planning system for the provision of new houses. 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 by 2014. 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.

The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils for increasing the number of homes and includes payment for long-term empty homes brought back into use. Proposals will be developed to utilise some of the existing bonus to start housing growth as well as reducing the number of empty properties through our *Empty Homes Initiative*, thereby generating further New Homes Bonus for 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 and broadband for the area and ultimately support the wider success of the Council's priorities.


A lot of the borough's industrial estates were built 20 - 30 years ago and are no longer fit for purpose. The *Remodelling Industrial Estates* plan will improve the prospects of economic recovery for the borough by enhancing estates and making West Lancashire a more attractive option for industry.

A staged progression will utilise reserves for the initial improvement works. Following the successful marketing of them, the income from new businesses will be used for further work on other estates.

Promoting Apprenticeships both within the council and throughout West Lancashire in partnership with Lancashire County Council and others will remain an important area of work.

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

Actions 2013-14

-  Housing Asset Management Plan
-  Tenant environment improvement programme
-  Moor Street resurfacing
-  Local environmental improvements
-  Public Realm
-  CCTV: expanding coverage

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. A programme of option appraisals will be developed for unsustainable properties and a tendering process will select contractors to carry out the work.

A *Tenant Environment Improvement Programme* has been established for small improvements to tenant areas, for example parking or gardens. Tenants' groups or individual tenants are able to propose areas for improvement.

A £700K project to improve Ormskirk's *Moor Street* in partnership with Lancashire County Council would carry out road resurfacing as well as environmental improvement works.

Local Environmental Improvements are being addressed through a budget of £50,000 in 2012/13, and we hope to continue this work in 2013/14. The budget has been used throughout the borough for example on street furniture, signposts, cleaning sculptures etc. The council also engages with Network Rail to facilitate the improved appearance of land, for example that covered with brambles.

The *Public Realm* agreement allows us to deliver services such as grass cutting of verges and hedge trimming on behalf of Lancashire County Council locally.

The Council made £250,000 available for *Expanding the coverage of CCTV* within the borough. In addition, under the terms of an agreement with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), £60,000 remaining from Performance Reward Grant funding for a CCTV upgrade project in 2011, was available for the scheme. Thirteen new cameras have been proposed for locations that have previously had no CCTV coverage. A further nine cameras have been proposed for improving and enhancing areas previously covered. Sites were finalised by Cabinet following consultation with Lancashire Constabulary, the Community Safety Partnership, CCTV operators and the LSP, as well as the results of a feasibility study. It is expected that the new cameras will be operational before the second half of 2013/14.

BUDGET STRATEGY

The Council has already implemented permanent ongoing savings of £3.3m over the first two years of the Business Plan process. These savings have had a minimal impact on service quality and have been achieved through partnership working, improved efficiency, reprioritisation of service delivery and targeted increases in fees and charges and other income.

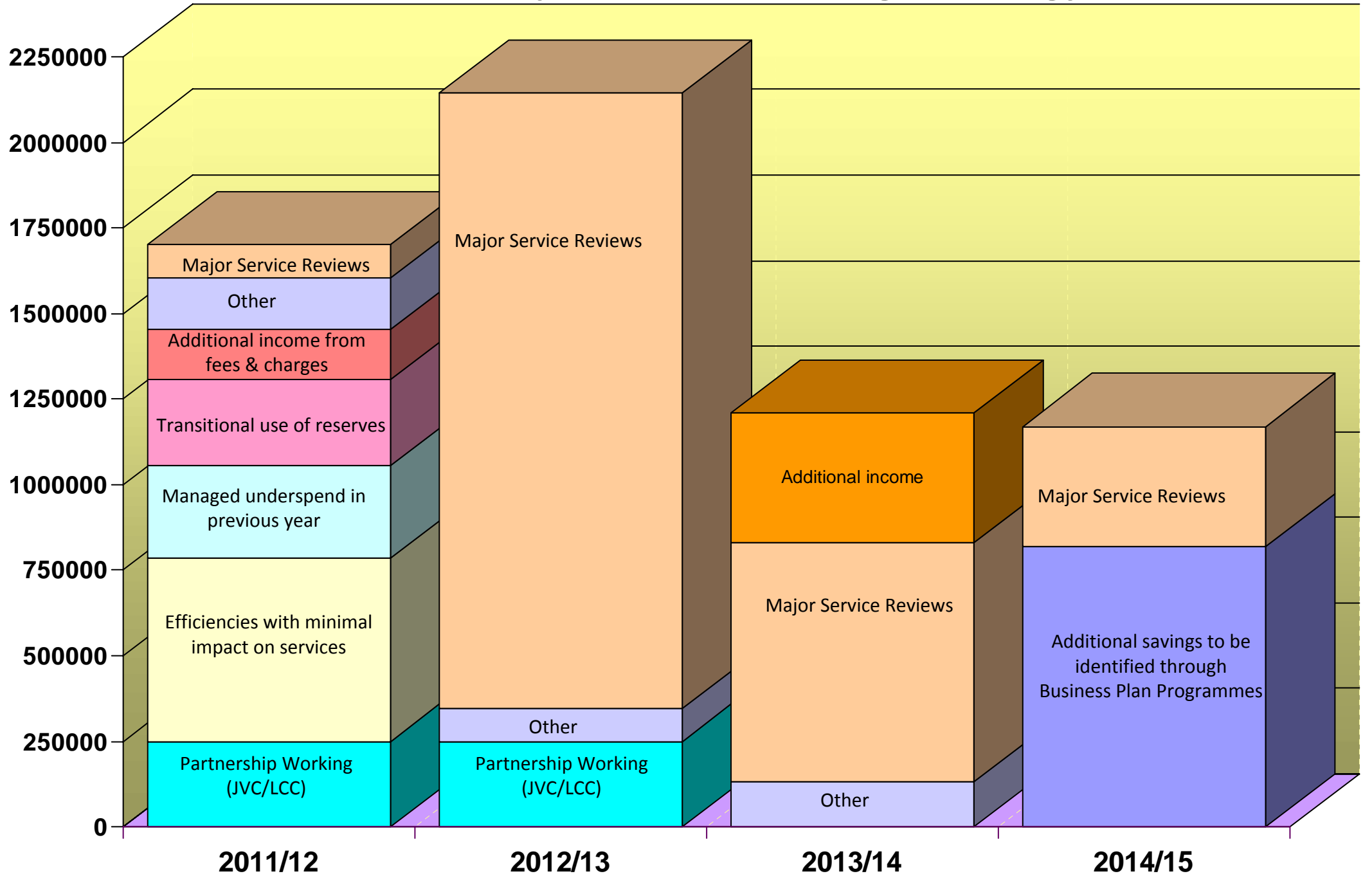
In recent months the Council has also agreed a further set of Major Service Review initiatives and other proposals that will enable it to save the £1.2m required to balance its budget in 2013-14. Once again the savings proposals that have been agreed reflect the Council's lean, local and fair principles.

The financial forecast covering 2014-15, which is the final year of the Business Plan, has recently been updated. This compares 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. This forecast projects a budget gap between spending and available resources of £1.17m. However savings of £0.35m have already been identified through the Major Service Review process, which means that there are £0.82m of additional savings required to be identified to achieve a balanced budget.

This financial forecast is based on a number of assumptions and has been calculated on a prudent but not worst case scenario taking into account information that is currently available. It should be noted that due to the inherent uncertainties involved with this type of financial projection there is scope for significant variance. Consequently the forecast will need to be periodically reviewed to ensure that it remains up to date. It does however provide a clear indication of the magnitude of savings that will be required.

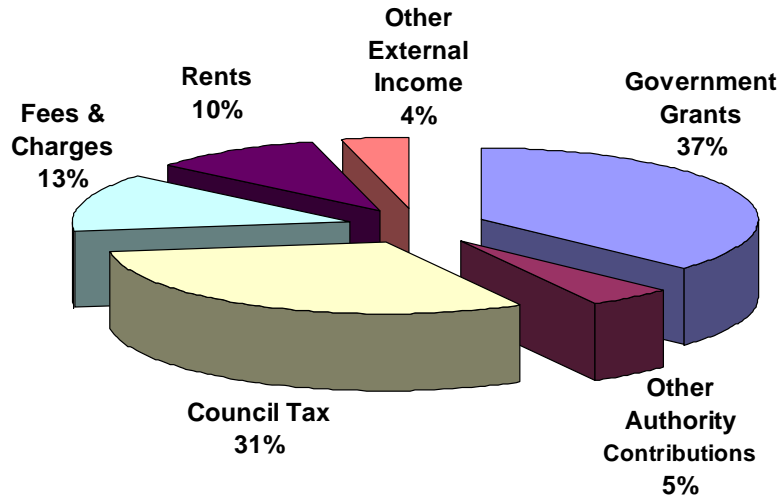
A graphical representation of the budget strategy is shown below:

Representation of Budget Strategy



RESOURCE BUDGETING AND STAFFING

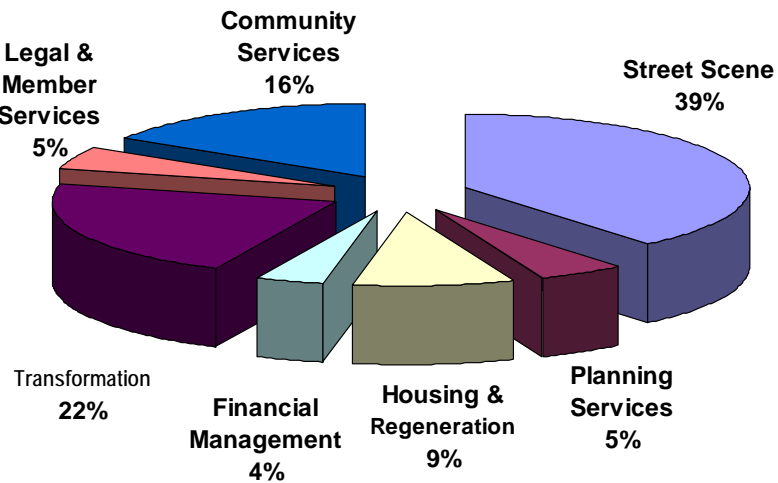
The Council's 2012/13 income was made up as follows



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 over the remainder of the current Business Plan period.

To manage this process effectively and sensitively, the Council will continue to limit external recruitment appropriately and use short term temporary contracts in particular to ensure potential redeployment opportunities for staff displaced as a result of the continued Major Service Review process. The Council will continue to seek to minimise compulsory redundancies as far as possible.

In 2012/13, the budget was spent as follows



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 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 contained within the Plan aimed at the delivery of our vision will be entered onto service risk registers with major projects being 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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