

# COUNCIL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18



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## Introduction

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It's been another busy and challenging year for the Council. It is understandable that we tend to focus on preparation and current operation rather than taking the time to reflect on what has already been achieved, however this annual report provides the opportunity to acknowledge our successes and demonstrates a strong record in delivering on our objectives.

In pursuing our priorities for the economy, environment and health and wellbeing, it is most satisfying when we can see the results of our work. During the year, construction started on a 27 home development in the centre of Ormskirk, early work was undertaken on the Beechtrees estate in Skelmersdale ahead of the construction of 36 new council homes, and improvements were made to the appearance of Ormskirk town centre and market. We are also making real progress now with the Skelmersdale town centre redevelopment and want to see development activity start there soon. St Modwen has agreed a deal for Lidl as an anchor tenant. Confirmation of the interest of key businesses will help the negotiations with other potential occupiers. We have also concluded the sale of several housing sites in the area which will lead to additional footfall for the scheme in the long term.

A project that will see improvements to the natural environment is our masterplan project for the Tawd Valley. The community together with a number of partnership organisations are involved in our plans to create new habitats, new pedestrian and cycle access

routes and educational activities. Collaboration on the project includes from colleges and schools and a Friends of Tawd Valley group that will ensure that the developments continue to be informed by local people.

Long term planning for the future is of course essential and there are several excellent projects in their preparatory stages. I was pleased that the Council was successful in its bid for One Public Estate programme funding. The fund enables councils to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration with central government and other public sector partners to make the most of our assets. A grant of £36K was received and this will be used to conduct feasibility studies and options appraisals for various underused buildings in Ormskirk, such as the former Magistrates Court. In September 2017 we also put forward a bid to the Forward Funding stream of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), requesting £40m to facilitate the potential growth of new homes and employment land at Skelmersdale. The bid was successful at this first round and will now be taken forward through to the co-development stage of the competitive HIF process. Working with partner organisations we will develop a more detailed business case for a further submission in March 2019.

We are also undertaking options appraisals for the procurement of Health and Wellbeing Hubs in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk,

working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to examine the potential for including health facilities. Resources being pooled in this way will be a real innovation in the way services are provided in West Lancs and will be significant assets for the community.

In addition to our planned work, we do of course have to respond to the impacts from events outside our control. We were pleased to learn that at Alt Crossens the Environment Agency has extended its notice period for turning off five satellite pumping stations until the end of 2018, and we will continue to press for a long term solution. We also had a positive outcome to the efforts on the Parrs Lane (Aughton) development appeal which saw the Council's decision upheld in line with the Local Plan and also the wishes of the local residents group.

There has been external recognition of our service's effectiveness with our Legal Services team being shortlisted for the Lawyers' in Local Government Legal Team of the Year Award for service excellence – creativity, innovation and responsiveness to clients' needs. The Housing Team were also shortlisted in the outstanding approach to promoting digital inclusion category in the UK Housing Awards and best digital inclusion initiative in the Northern Housing Awards for a project for installing Wi-Fi in all the communal sheltered accommodation schemes.

As productive as our year has been, we have more to do and we have refocused our priorities for the forthcoming year so that we can continue to deliver our ambitions for West Lancashire – our Economy, Environment and for Health and Wellbeing.

Councillor Ian Moran  
**Leader of West Lancashire Borough Council**

## Chief Executive's Review

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I am pleased to introduce this Annual Report which summarises the good progress made on the major projects identified in the Council Plan for 2017/18. There is a significant amount of work in evidence here, and no success is a result of a single service area working alone.

We understand the value of bringing people together from across services to share expertise, and we extend this approach in our partnerships with colleagues in the Liverpool City Region and Lancashire, including through Growth Lancashire and Associate Membership of Liverpool City Region. It is essential to actively participate in these collaborative arrangements so that we can take advantage of the added value that can be generated, and from the national devolution agenda. More locally, we are ensuring West Lancashire will be in a position to benefit from growth opportunities through the extensive Local Plan Review process which is now underway. This will take several years to complete and provides a comprehensive examination of opportunities for the Borough.

The financial position remains challenging. We identified a further £1.2m of efficiencies from Policy Options, including £100K from management restructuring during 2017/18. Existing workstreams around more commercial approaches to services, such as plans for a Council-owned Development Company, and seeking further efficiencies through increasing the use of technology, will help generate ongoing savings and income, but it would be unrealistic to expect these actions to be enough in themselves to maintain a sustainable budget in the medium term.

The Government's expectation that all councils will be self-financing by 2021 has led us to develop a new Council-wide initiative; the Sustainable Organisational Review Project. Supported by external advisors this will create a sustainable operating model by establishing long term changes to how the Council is organised and financed, such as officer structure, increased income generation and the use of 'lean' processes and options around ICT/agile working. The project is currently in its early stages and is not expected to conclude until 2021. Such a fundamental review is likely to create uncertainty among staff. Keeping an open, ongoing dialogue is an integral part of the process. Informed by feedback from the annual staff survey we are also refreshing the attitudes and approaches statement that underpins the Council's values, so that staff understand the organisation's requirements going forward. We continue to enhance ICT and training opportunities so that staff are equipped with the necessary facilities and skills to take service developments forward.

To assist in delivering the Council's priorities, we listen and act on feedback from residents, businesses and visitors to make sure we continue to provide the best possible services within the resources available. We encourage stakeholders and residents to provide feedback and engage with the Council via our various consultations during the year, our four-star website and Twitter feed.

It is some years since we were bound to report performance figures, however maintaining public reporting of progress on key projects and indicators provides transparency and consistency. Where we can most accurately compare is of course with our own

previous performance, and in overall terms we are positively improving on our performance in previous years.

The strength of any Council is its workforce, and I believe that West Lancashire has a team to be proud of. It's right to celebrate our achievements, crediting staff and supporting our One Team culture.

I would like to express my continued thanks to staff and Councillors for their ongoing commitment to the Council and look forward to the coming year and the difference that we will make.

Kim Webber  
**Chief Executive**

## Our Priorities in 2017/18

Our Priorities in 2017/18 followed a three-year plan enabling us to plan for our financial and staffing requirements and look for longer-term opportunities to help achieve our ambitions.

**Vision:** To be a Council which is ambitious for West Lancashire

**Values:**

- Enterprising – being innovative and creative, delivering lasting improvements
- Inclusive – working in partnership to benefit West Lancashire, and being open and involving in the way decisions are made
- Equality – promoting equality and reducing inequality
- One Council – adopting a co-ordinated approach
- Caring – valuing and developing employees

### Priorities & Key Projects:

#### Ambitious for our Economy

Retain and grow jobs, increase skills levels and encourage business and wealth

- Skelmersdale Vision
- Land Auction
- Economic Development Strategy & Delivery
- Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy & Delivery
- Partnership working for infrastructure delivery identified in West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan
- Combined Authority for Lancashire
- Engagement with Liverpool City Region
- Branding of Skelmersdale & Ormskirk
- Local Plan Review

#### Ambitious for our Environment

Enhance the built and physical environment, and its cleanliness

- Key site developments
- Estates Revival - Beechtrees
- Housing New Build Programme
- Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Development Company – Options Appraisal
- Street Scene Priority Projects
- Street Scene Strategy Development
- Community Safety Partnership Initiatives
- Tawd Valley Improvements
- Car Park Management & Enforcement Review

#### Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing

Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities

- Leisure Strategy & Delivery
- West Lancashire Health & Wellbeing Strategy Development
- Well Skelmersdale Project
- Housing Capital Programme
- Sheltered Housing
- Digital Inclusion Strategy & Delivery
- Tenants' Financial Inclusion Strategy & Delivery
- Homelessness Strategy

### West Lancashire – Ambitious for All - our businesses, our places, our people

The Council Plan is reviewed every three years and updated annually to maintain its currency. Making sure the whole organisation recognises our priorities ensures we direct our efforts and resources in the most effective and efficient way. Our priority actions and activities during the year are outlined below.

## Priority: Ambitious for our Economy

We will retain and grow jobs, increase skills levels and encourage business and wealth.

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A number of projects were identified to help achieve this ambition. Highlights of the progress made in 2017/18 are given below.

### Skelmersdale Town Centre

Following the successful conclusion of the judicial review process, St Modwen continue to market the retail and commercial leisure scheme with planning consent, and discussions took place around the delivery of the scheme in the challenging retail environment. Heads of Terms have been agreed with two major retailers and minor changes will be needed to the scheme to meet their requirements. St Modwen are in the process of discharging planning conditions. A site within the town centre has been identified for the new leisure centre and talks around the involvement of the Clinical Commissioning Group and how the centre will be delivered are underway. Three town centre housing sites have been sold to Gleeson Homes and work to deliver over 200 units should start on site shortly.

### Land Auction

During the year, all four sites at Whalleys in Skelmersdale were marketed and sales agreed. The initial receipt for the sale of the land was received by the Council. The land disposal elements of the Land Auction model involves Homes England and the Council bringing development sites forward for sale. The scheme helps meet the objectives of the West Lancashire Local Plan, including

providing a supply of ready to build housing sites, and will provide capital income to be used for proposals which will assist in the regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre.

### Economic Development Strategy and Delivery

The Strategy contains a wide variety of actions which have been pursued throughout the year. The Council became a member of Growth Lancashire in March 2017 with the Leader of the Council taking a seat on the Board. The Council has continued to support the work of the Skills, Training and Employment Partnership and has worked closely with Growth Lancashire to refer businesses through to *Boost*, a programme which gives access to various funded programmes in areas such as mentoring, product development, leadership development, and accessing finance.

*49 local businesses referred to Boost Business Lancashire*

The Council has continued to support Employment and Skills Charter businesses and the Skelmersdale Ambassadors scheme now with over 100 members has enabled a good dialogue with local businesses to be maintained.

- *Employment & Skills Charter - 56 signatories*
- *15 apprenticeships created after officer intervention*

## Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy and Delivery

Ormskirk's Town Centre Management Group has continued to raise the town's profile and cater for the changing needs of the high street, working in partnership with the Council, local partners and businesses. An annual events programme has been developed, including the Gingerbread Festival, Love Your Market and Moor Street Night Markets, adding to established events and expanding the appeal of the town.

*September was Ormskirk's busiest month for footfall with 566,885 trips*

The attractiveness of the Moor Street gateway benefitted from the alterations to the highway and street furniture making it more flexible for events and more appealing to visitors. A review of the market stalls has helped improve the shopping experience. The potential of creating a Business Improvement District (BID) in Ormskirk took a step further with the Council agreeing to support and assist the Town Centre Management Group and any future BID Steering Group in developing the proposal. These initiatives aim to ensure Ormskirk town centre's long term economic and social viability.

- *Ormskirk town centre ground floor units vacancy rate 6.8% (national rate 8.9%; regional 11.4%)<sup>1</sup>*
- *Ormskirk town centre independent retail units 64.6% (national average 42.9%; regional 58.7%)<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> January 2018 – Springboard

## Infrastructure Delivery Identified in West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan

Our economic ambitions for the area are reliant on ensuring where possible that West Lancashire's transport infrastructure is developed to meet our future needs. We aim to influence and assist infrastructure development by working closely with Lancashire County Council (LCC) and other partners on the projects identified in the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan. In addition, the Council has made a £40m bid for Housing Infrastructure Funding and has been successful in progressing onto a short list of 44 projects that will be subject of further assessment by Homes England over the coming months.

The most significant project in the Masterplan is the creation of a new Skelmersdale Rail Link with services to Manchester and Liverpool. The Council is partnering with LCC and Merseytravel to bring this major project forward. During the year £5m funding from LCC and Merseytravel was agreed to conduct further feasibility studies. If a strong business case can be developed and appropriate funding for the scheme be secured (estimated to be around £300m) the scheme has the potential to be delivered within 10 years.

During the year, with our input, LCC finalised the West Lancashire Route Management Strategy. In so doing, a series of highways projects were identified for implementation by LCC to deliver the different aspects of the Strategy across the Borough. Further work on an Ormskirk Town Centre Movement Strategy was commissioned in March 2018 for completion in the coming year.



## **Combined Authority for Lancashire and Engagement with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority**

We continue to promote West Lancashire's profile and ambitions within the wider regional agenda through our involvement with other Lancashire Authorities with a particular focus on a potential Combined Authority. Discussions and collaboration between Lancashire authorities continues, whilst awaiting confirmation from central government around the opportunities and timelines to take this project forward. The Council has maintained membership of the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and officers meet with colleagues from both the Liverpool City Region LEP as well as those from the Lancashire LEP to discuss issues of mutual interest. We have also continued as an Associate Member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and attend relevant meetings of the Housing and Spatial Planning Board.

*In a recent survey 62% of stakeholder respondents are satisfied with West Lancashire as a place to operate their organisation or business*

## **Branding of Skelmersdale and Ormskirk**

Strong branding for West Lancashire's two main towns is helping promote the Borough as a great place to visit, work, invest and study. Distinctive Skelmersdale and Ormskirk branding and classic images complement business branding and help create a sense of place. A dedicated website for Skelmersdale [letstalkSkelmersdale.com](http://letstalkSkelmersdale.com) and social media platforms on Twitter and LinkedIn were launched in October 2017 with a strong business focus highlighting Skelmersdale's strengths. The Council has

supported the Skelmersdale Steering Group (a collaboration of private and public sector leaders) in helping to promote the area regionally, nationally and internationally, with the aim of attracting inward investment. The Skelmersdale Ambassadors network (supported by the Skelmersdale Steering Group) has been created to help businesses establish connections, access new opportunities and raise the profile of their business and the area. A regular programme of Skelmersdale Ambassadors network events has been established.

- *Follow us on twitter @ltskelmersdale and [linkedin.com/skelmersdale](https://www.linkedin.com/company/skelmersdale)*
- *Overall, Skelmersdale supports around 43% of all jobs in West Lancashire*

Ormskirk branding has been used to develop promotional branded merchandise. The town now also has a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram and a number of persuasive social media campaigns have been run to promote local business sectors e.g. independent businesses, the food and drink sector, local attractions etc. We have also supported businesses to develop their own online presence by offering free digital marketing workshops.

- *Around 50 free business listings on [DiscoverOrmskirk.com](http://DiscoverOrmskirk.com)*
- *1,100 followers of [facebook.com/DiscoverOrmskirk](https://www.facebook.com/DiscoverOrmskirk)*

## **Local Plan Review**

A review of the current Local Plan 2012-2027 is being held to ensure that we have a long term vision for land use plans for the Borough that remains in line with evolving national planning policy and is adapted for local needs. The Local Plan is principally about land use, but covers everything from where new homes, employment sites, and retail and leisure facilities should be situated to considering the potential impact from those developments on leading healthy lives, social interaction, employment opportunities and inequalities between different localities.

The lengthy review process made good progress during 2017/18. Consideration of the planning issues relevant to West Lancashire and a range of options for addressing those issues were developed into an Issues and Options paper. The Issues and Options were then extensively consulted on, along with the intended scope of the Local Plan, during March and April 2017. Following analysis of the consultation feedback, evidence is being collated that will inform the preparation of a Preferred Options document. It is anticipated that the Preferred Options will be publicly consulted on in the autumn of 2018.

## Priority: Ambitious for our Environment

We will enhance the built and physical environment and its cleanliness.

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A number of projects were identified to help achieve this ambition. Highlights of the progress made in 2017/18 are given below.

### Key Site Developments

The **Moor Street Gateway** for Ormskirk project will redevelop the existing bus station and car park site including potential commercial, cultural, residential, employment and leisure uses. A competitive tender exercise is being undertaken and prospective development partners will produce indicative proposals for the site as part of a competitive dialogue process. The next stage will be for a preferred partner to be selected based on the indicative proposals and for a finalised, detailed scheme to be developed. This is required before a decision on whether to proceed can be made and then an application for planning consent made.

The Council was also able to take forward the development of 27 new homes on the former **Westec House** site, close to the Council offices in Derby Street, in the heart of Ormskirk. The details of the scheme means that 18 of the houses being built are specifically to be sold by the Council, which is the first time this arrangement has been agreed. One home will be for shared ownership and the remaining eight one-bedroom flats will be retained for rent. The site is currently under construction.

### Estates Revival - Beechtrees

The £4 million Beechtrees Revival scheme (Digmoor, Skelmersdale) is helping revitalise and enhance the council estate and provide new homes for council tenants. During the year, the project received planning approval for 36 new two-bedroomed homes. These are due to be constructed during 2018 on the site of nine old blocks of flats and four houses, demolished to make way for the new properties. The new homes will significantly improve the appearance of the area and the remaining flats will be improved through new kitchens, bathrooms and heating, as well as replacement windows and doors to maintain a modernised and sustainable housing stock.

### Housing New Build Programme

An initial £1.7 million fund comprising around £0.5 million of retained capital from the sale of Council properties under the right-to-buy scheme, plus £1.2 million match funding from the Council will be used to provide the types of property that are most needed in the Borough, in ways that deliver the best possible value for money including a number of new build properties. The funding will develop options for schemes that will provide a mixture of homes for rent and purchase, and consider the purchase of a small number of properties from the open market, to add to the Council's housing stock for rent.

### **Development Company – Options Appraisal**

The Options Appraisal resulted in the approval for the establishment of a shadow Development Company in February 2018. The shadow Development Company will prepare the financial and governance arrangements, appoint key staff and identify key development sites to support the Business Plan. Subject to Council approval, the Development Company will drive forward the commercial ambitions of the Council by building on the expertise and experience gained through recent Council regeneration projects. Objectives include generating a financial return through development of profitable services/activities; creating profitable, complementary and transparent relationships with landowners, developers and investors; securing additional private and Government investment into the Borough enabling the construction of new homes for sale and rent, supporting regeneration and commercial and industrial schemes; and maximising appropriate development and growth. A final decision on progressing the Development Company will be taken by full Council in October.

### **Private Sector Housing Strategy**

During the year, key pieces of work have helped implement the strategy and ensure that residents of West Lancashire maintain access to decent homes which are in good repair, safe, secure, and warm. For the fifth year, we promoted the LCC-funded Winter Warm Scheme whereby qualifying owner-occupiers can have their gas heating appliances repaired or replaced for free helping save money on their gas bills. The private sector housing team also prepared for work with a national database of rogue landlords, who may be based in other areas but operating across authority boundaries, and new rules that will allow fines or banning orders to

be imposed on landlords not complying with the law. These measures will provide additional protection for tenants. In addition, guidance for landlords was created to help them meet their obligations for providing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

*There are around 42,000 private sector homes in West Lancashire. Circa 5,350 of these are available for private rent.*

### **Street Scene Priority Projects & Strategy Development**

A review of the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Service has been completed. With the aim of achieving savings of £150K by 2019/20, the review was undertaken by the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) and made significant recommendations around processes to achieve efficiencies and reduce the level of reactive work. Actions that will be taken forward over a 12-month period include investment in a scheduling/asset management software system to produce quantitative data and work schedules for delivery by appropriate levels of staff; development of mobile technology to create paperless systems; a review of service standards in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders and agreed by Members; the development of a litter bin strategy; and a review of equipment. The outcome of this work will involve the production of a Street Scene Strategy.

*1.04 days average to remove fly tips following reporting*

The service is also progressing a Borough-wide review of refuse collection routes to ensure that rounds are delivered in the most efficient way and a GIS mapping project for areas of work such as grass cutting and litter bins.

*In a recent resident survey:*

- *86% of respondents were satisfied with household collections for domestic waste*
- *79% of respondents were satisfied with household collections for recyclable materials*

### **Community Safety Partnership Initiatives**

As a partner in the multi-agency Partnership, the Council supports projects and interventions that tackle crime and disorder. A key element of the Council contribution to the partnership is managing the Borough's CCTV monitoring unit for 107 public space cameras.

*In a recent resident survey:*

- *78% of respondents feel safe and secure within West Lancashire*
- *43% of respondents believe CCTV helps reduce the fear of crime in the community*

The Partnership had previously commissioned a film which warned young people about the dangers of gang culture and knife crime

which was delivered to approximately 1,000 high school students this year. Approximately 25 schools benefited from teachers being taught to deliver training around Child Sexual Exploitation in schools. Annual campaigns were undertaken for Bright Sparx, tackling seasonal anti-social behaviour, and Welcome Week initiatives that help local Edge Hill University students integrate safely and responsibly into the community. The partnership also supported the national White Ribbon Campaign for ending male violence towards women. The Council joined the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, all other Lancashire Councils and Lancashire Police in becoming accredited as White Ribbon organisations, leading to Lancashire becoming the first White Ribbon county.

- *12 Community Engagement events held to promote relationships between agencies and the community, with 300 tons of waste being removed.*
- *Contributed to joint bids which resulted in over £250,000 worth of Home Office funding for domestic abuse initiatives offered by the Liberty Centre.*

### **Tawd Valley Improvements**

During 2017, extensive public consultation through public events and presentations, schools and college workshops, press coverage, a visioning event, and an on-line survey resulted in a draft masterplan for the Tawd Valley Park project. The wide-ranging masterplan aims to make the park more accessible and broaden its appeal through retaining and improving existing facilities such as footpaths, cycle paths, woodland and landscapes, whilst developing new areas of interest for example a visitor centre, BMX track,

wetland habitat areas, a heritage trail and picnic spaces. External sources and Council development funding has been secured to take the plans forward. The project requires significant input from other agencies and organisations and a Friends of Tawd Valley group has been established. The Friends group will provide input into the planning and delivery of the scheme and help support the maintenance of the park to ensure that the outcomes of the project are sustainable.

### **Car Park Management and Enforcement Review**

Ensuring that parking facilities keep pace with changing shopping and visitor habits is part of maintaining the vitality of town centres. We regularly run festive parking offers at the busiest shopping period of the year and have implemented low-cost parking for Ormskirk town centre. Backed by businesses, simple, consistent tariffs have been introduced across the town centre car parks, including a charge of £1 for three hours. Our car parks are maintained to a high standard and will feature the latest generation of ticket machines. We have also reviewed car park design to ensure that disabled bays are located in the most accessible areas of the car parks and continue to meet the guidelines for the number of spaces provided

- *10 Council-run car parks in Ormskirk providing around 933 spaces*

## Priority: Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing

We will improve the health and wellbeing of local communities.

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We have made considerable progress in this priority, particularly in the key projects for 2017/18 outlined below.

### Leisure Strategy and Delivery

Work around a procurement strategy and business case development for new premises for replacement leisure facilities in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk is taking place. The Council is working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to examine options for these developments to include health facilities. Establishing Health and Wellbeing Hubs for communities will provide a broader range of services and facilities in one location whilst helping manage costs to the Council.

Work is now progressing with North Meols Parish Council around the potential community transfer of Banks Leisure Centre and we are developing a business plan for improvements to Burscough Sports Centre.

- *Maintained Green Flag awards for Beacon Country Park and Coronation Park (Ormskirk).*

### West Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Strategy Development

Being ambitious for health and wellbeing is embedded in our Council vision and our Health and Wellbeing Strategy can make a real difference to people's lives. Building on existing opportunities around health, fitness and general wellbeing in the Borough, the strategy sets out a framework for improving the quality of life for residents by integrating and promoting health in wider services such as housing, the environment, leisure, economic regeneration, planning and community safety. We will now be taking the plans forward by working with key public sector partners, particularly through the West Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Partnership, to maximise investment and effort and enable residents to lead healthier lives.

- *10,615 took part in health improvement activities (sport, art, countryside)*
- *50% of residents responding to a recent survey are satisfied with parks and open spaces*
- *1.1 million annual visitors to leisure centres & swimming pools*

### **Well Skelmersdale Project**

The Council is a partner in the Well Skelmersdale project, part of the Well North movement funded by Public Health England. The project is helping achieve positive social impact by allowing the community to reach its full potential through creating healthy environments for healthy living. Council Officers form part of the Well Skelmersdale project meetings and network to promote the joint planning and delivery of services and ensuring strategic links with key Council projects including the Town Centre redevelopment, Tawd Valley Master Plan and introduction of co-located Leisure, Health & Wellbeing facilities.

### **Housing Capital Programme**

The Housing Capital Programme continued to deliver planned improvement works for our stock of around 6,000 homes from the £65M five-year Regenerating Homes budget.

In 2017/18, £10.6M was allocated to maintain the stock and help make tenants feel proud of their homes. We carried out work in a variety of areas including replacing bathrooms and installing heating systems and electrical upgrades. We were also able to undertake significant external improvements such as re-roofing which assists with the appearance of the local neighbourhoods, and helped with energy efficiency by installing new loft installation. Work on capital improvements (in addition to repairs service) will continue in 2018/19.

- *523 new bathrooms fitted*
- *509 heating systems upgraded*
- *383 electrical upgrades*
- *112 properties re-roofed, including new upvc fascia, soffits and rainwater goods*
- *98 properties had upvc double glazed windows installed*

### **Sheltered Housing**

Following significant grant and budget reductions for delivery of the Sheltered Accommodation service, scheme reviews and consultation with residents resulted in a revised sustainable sheltered housing management service launched in April 2017. A survey of residents and staff was carried out during 2017 on the new service and feedback was very positive from both customers and staff who support the customer choice and flexibility of the new offer, which includes staff contact tailored to individual need. A project to upgrade the communication equipment at the sheltered sites which includes smoke detectors linked to Home Care Link has been deployed into all but one intended site, whilst Wifi is installed first.



## Digital Inclusion

The Council is continuing to develop its online offer directly through the Digital Development Plan which ensures that all our services consider the use of digital technologies as part of service delivery for efficiency reasons and to meet customer expectations. Digital Inclusion work is also being carried out as we recognise that as more and more services (not only from the Council) move online, it is important that we help residents to gain basic online skills and access to the internet. We have working agreements with community resource centres, CAB, Lancashire Libraries Services to offer Assisted Digital Support for residents who need help with claiming online Universal Credit.

A project to install Wi-Fi in all of our communal sheltered accommodation schemes saw the Council become a 2018 finalist in the Northern Housing Awards 'outstanding approach to promoting digital inclusion' category. As well as the Wifi installation, our residents were introduced to digital taster sessions and offered courses through Lancashire Adult Learning in the comfort of their own communal lounge. An early review of outcomes, using a small sample of the schemes, indicated that ownership of devices had gone from 18% to 76%, and that 88% of residents were now accessing services online, such as NHS Choices.

### *In a recent resident survey:*

- *92% of respondents use the internet*
- *78% of respondents use the internet every day*
- *76% of respondents over 65 use the internet*
- *69% of respondents had used the Council website to access information*

## Financial Inclusion for Tenants

The strategy supports financially excluded Council tenants affected by welfare reforms to sustain their tenancy and increase their opportunities for employability. The Money Advice Service (MAS) is a key part of delivering the strategy and this year was expanded to meet unprecedented demand for assistance following the full service rollout of Universal Credit (UC) in December 2017. Through the year, MAS has dealt with 1,142 cases, of which 229 were for Personal Budgeting Advice to UC claimants and 17 Assisted Digital Support for claiming UC online. Advice and assistance can also be provided pre-tenancy. As well as providing this direct contact with tenants, we have also introduced text message reminders for MAS appointments and further developed the website for budgeting help and money advice. The Income Management team are working to increase the number of payment dates available for direct debits, and promoting use of the mobile Housing App, to encourage quicker, more convenient ways to pay rent and check rent balances.

- *1,347 tenants signed up to SMS/E mail services*
- *572 tenants signed up to the Housing App and 252 have used the rents menu*
- *20% of tenants paying by direct debit*

## Homelessness Strategy

A key focus of the Homelessness Advice and Prevention Team is around preventing rather than resolving homelessness. As part of the strategy implementation, a homelessness prevention toolkit and improved advice service was developed which helped manage 51 prevention cases in 2017/18 (compared with 19 the previous year). This work has been a principal part of preparation for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force in April 2018. The Act increases the number of people eligible for advice and assistance at a much earlier stage thereby reducing the number of people becoming homeless. Additional homelessness prevention funding has been provided by central government for the development of this service, which will also require future changes to ICT systems for recording data around homelessness in the Borough.

- *93 homeless presentations*
- *22 evictions from private rented accommodation*
- *17 placements in temporary accommodation*
- *0 placements in bed & breakfast / hostel*

## Managing the Budget

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The challenging financial climate facing the Council means that it is essential that budgets are effectively controlled and that financial targets are achieved.

On the Council's General Revenue Account (which covers all services apart from the Council's housing stock) a favourable budget variance of £218,000 was achieved in 2017/18, or 1.7% of the total budget. This continues the trend of strong financial management that has been demonstrated in previous years and means that this account currently has a healthy financial position.

However the latest medium term financial forecast projects an estimated budget gap of between £1.5m and £2.0m by 2020/21, which would represent over 10% of the total budget. The scale of this gap, which is primarily caused by ongoing reductions in government grant funding, will represent a significant financial challenge and consequently this issue is included on the Council's Key Risk Register. The primary means to address this position will be through a Sustainable Organisation Review process which has been agreed and is now underway. This review will seek to close the budget gap, primarily through generating additional income and efficiency savings, to enable a balanced medium term financial position to be achieved.

A favourable budget variance of £1.4m, or 5.5%, has been achieved this year on the Housing Revenue Account (which covers all costs and income associated with the Council's housing stock). This strong performance means that this account is well placed to deal with future financial challenges, including ongoing rent reductions of 1% per year in the period up to 2020 in line with government policy.

## Performance Data

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The Council's Corporate Performance Suite is aligned to the corporate priorities and actions, which are agreed each year.

It contains a range of performance indicators (PIs) and data items aimed at highlighting performance in key service areas. The suite facilitates monitoring of service levels and is one element used by the authority to help it understand how well it is performing and therefore whether the organisation is on track to achieve its priorities.

Not all the indicators relate to operational performance. Our satisfaction survey results are also included and these help us better understand how our services are perceived in the community. We also include information that helps demonstrate that we are operating as an efficient organisation.

From the performance information available, 71% of targets for available PIs in the suite were met or exceeded in 2017/18, with 50% of available outturns showing an improvement or matching the previous year. This reflects that overall the Council is continuing to maintain a good level of performance in many of our frontline and support services, despite significant pressures on resources.

The performance suite is monitored quarterly by Cabinet and scrutinised by the Corporate & Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The annual outturn is provided in Appendix A.

## Highlights

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West Lancashire benefits from a broad base of organisations and individuals who create diverse activities for the Borough. The Council is involved with a variety of partners helping to stage a range of events throughout the year which contribute to making the Borough a vibrant and pleasant place to live. All our activities and events are promoted via our website, press releases and our Twitter account. This contributes to a recent survey result, which indicated that 74% of people are satisfied with the local area as a place to live. The following is a selection of events and actions from throughout the year, many of them dependent on working with other organisations.

### April 2017

- Helping keep children safe and reduce problems with dog fouling, a decision was taken to **ban dogs from 26 more children's play areas** and to require dogs to be kept on leads in five specified areas in public parks and playing fields.
- Dog owners were able to have pets checked over and get them microchipped at a **Dog Welfare Roadshow** at Tanhouse Community Centre.
- Residents were invited to sign up to the new **chargeable garden waste service** with the quickest and most convenient way to pay being via the Council website.
- Consultation closed on Issues and Options for the **Local Plan Review**.

### May 2017

- Ormskirk celebrated its much loved market with events and entertainment as part of the annual **Love Your Local Market** fortnight.
- A **Medieval Weekend** was held in Coronation Park for people to experience the sights, smells, sounds and tastes of Norman England and the Byzantine empire, 900 years ago.
- **DiscoverOrmskirk.com** launched.
- Home Care Link service achieved **TeleCare Association Accreditation**, an award that is a significant step towards meeting the highest quality standards for the industry. The service operates and provides monitoring support for vulnerable clients 24 hours a day.

### June 2017

- A **free family fun day** was held at Richmond Park, Burscough with plenty of attractions including fair rides.
- **Elections** were held for the General Election (74.41% turnout); and by-elections in Derby Ward (31.18% turnout) and Aughton Park (76.36% turnout).
- [westlancs.gov.uk](http://westlancs.gov.uk) was named as a top performing **4 star council website** by the SOCITM Better Connected Survey, putting us in the top 9% of Council websites
- The Parks and Countryside Service teamed up with Divine Days Community Arts CIC to host the third **Ormskirk Dance Festival**.
- **Armed Forces Day** was marked with a special event to honour the sacrifices made.

## July 2017

- The first **Moor Street Night Market** was held with local food and drink establishments setting up on the streets alongside live music and street entertainment.
- Children aged between 5 and 12 were given the chance to join in with a variety of summer holiday activities with the **Junior Rangers Club**.
- The Chapel Gallery hosted the prestigious **Lancashire Open Exhibition**, a celebration of works by accomplished artists from across the UK
- The fabulous **Green Fayre** celebrating of the countryside and countryside living was held over two days for thousands of visitors in Beacon Country Park, Skelmersdale.

## October 2017

- Residents were invited to sign up for the **Free Tree scheme**. First introduced in October 2008, over 6,000 trees have now been given to residents to improve the Borough's environment and attract more wildlife into gardens.
- Local schools took part in mock meetings at the Council to learn how a

## August 2017

- Over 30,000 people enjoyed the seventh year of the **Ormskirk Motorfest**, organised by Aintree Circuit Club and supported by the Council, it has become one of the North West's biggest free family events.
- West Lancs residents were invited to a **Community Action Day** in Little Digmaor, Skelmersdale.
- More than 25 people completed the **first Active West Lancs Couch to 5K** 12-week programme in Skelmersdale reaching a 35-45 minute run by week 12.
- The annual **West Lancashire Walking Festival** was held covering short, themed, strolls to long distance countryside rambles.

## November 2017

- Ormskirk Clock Tower and Lightcube in Skelmersdale were illuminated purple to raise **awareness for pancreatic cancer** throughout November
- Dog owners were invited along to Evermoor Hub, Birleywood, Skelmersdale for **free health checks** for their pets which included advice on diets, free

## September 2017

- Winners of the 2017 **West Lancashire Design Awards** were announced. The awards acknowledges the importance of good quality development and building design.
- **Active West Lancs** promoted a new programmes including a 12-week Active Weight programme in Burscough and Skelmersdale, a second Couch to 5K and a Health Week of free fun activities.
- The Red Ensign Flag was raised at Derby St offices, in recognition of **Merchant Navy Day**.
- A **Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy** was adopted to create an attractive environment and provide opportunities for sustainable forms of travel.

## December 2017

- A landmark decision was taken to approve a scheme at the former Council-owned Westec site that allows the authority for the first time to **build houses to be sold**.
- A pair of **Wishing Wings** were installed in Digmaor Parade, Skelmersdale following involvement of the community, artists and the Arts Development Service.

local council operates as part of **Local Democracy Week**.

- Extensive research by the Heritage and Environment Team resulted in seven more of the area's **war memorials** earning a place on the National Heritage List for England.
- **letstalkSkelmersdale.com**, the business-focused website for Skelmersdale, was officially launched.

## January 2018

- Residents were given the opportunity to comment on how WLBC should spend money raised from **Community Infrastructure Levy** on local projects.
- A new **Housing Allocations and Pet Policy** was approved.
- Council offered **advice to residents about tree contractors** to always check carefully that firms are suitably qualified and insured
- Our **Citizen and Stakeholder Survey** was launched.
- £300K CIL funding for the **Tawd Valley Masterplan** project was approved.
- Work started on the development of the **Westec** site in Ormskirk.

microchipping and goodie bags for puppy owners.

- **A Festival of Tales** arts event developed with Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group, and Edge Hill University in partnership with local businesses and received a £15,000 grant from the Arts Lottery Programme.
- The **Ormskirk Christmas lights switch on** event proved popular with almost double the footfall on the previous year.

## February 2018

- The Housing Team were shortlisted in the *outstanding approach to promoting digital inclusion* category for the UK Housing Awards 2018 for the work around WiFi installation in all its communal sheltered accommodation schemes to make the **internet more accessible to older people**.
- The Council announced a **£13m housing investment programme** for 2018/19 for creating new homes and making hundreds of others even better.
- Residents interested in being a **candidate or agent** for Borough elections were invited to briefing sessions.
- The **Local Plan Review: Issues & Options Topic Papers** were approved for public consultation.

- All of West Lancashire moved to full service **Universal Credit** on 13 December 2017, following its limited first introduction in September 2014.
- Shopkeepers across Ormskirk decorated their windows for the **best dressed window competition** and shoppers were asked to vote by visiting the Chapel Gallery.
- The Council's first **Health and Wellbeing Strategy** was approved.

## March 2018

- We were awarded a grant of £36K from the national **One Public Estate programme** to undertake feasibility studies and options appraisals for various underused buildings in Ormskirk.
- The **Sustainable Organisational Review Project** was launched to help bridge the budget gap for the Council and will look at officer structure, the way we organise work, the use of 'lean' processes and ICT/agile working.
- The Lightcube on Exchange Island in Skelmersdale was lit up in red and blue to mark **World Down Syndrome Day**
- **New Property Compliance Policies** around fire, water hygiene, electrical installation, asbestos and gas safety were approved.

## Strategy Review – Council Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21

A new strategic Council Plan was developed for April 2018. A summary of the plan and projects is given below.

### Our Vision

#### To be a Council which is ambitious for West Lancashire – our Economy, Environment and for Health and Wellbeing

We are ambitious for our economy, and for inclusive growth in West Lancashire, retaining and growing good quality jobs, increasing skills levels and encouraging business and wealth generation. This is matched by our ambitions for a good quality, clean, built and physical environment, and for ensuring the conditions are in place for people in West Lancashire to live healthy and fulfilling lives. These ambitions are reflected in the priorities and key projects that have been identified.

### Our Values

**Collaborative** – working in partnership to benefit West Lancashire, being open and involving in the way decisions are made, and adopting a co-ordinated 'one Council' approach

**Empowering** – valuing and developing communities and employees to take responsibility for solutions, and to make the most of our local assets

**Enterprising** – being innovative and creative, delivering lasting improvements and ongoing efficiencies to bring the Council to a sustainable position

**Equality** – promoting equality and seeking to reduce inequality

**Focused** – being strategic and prioritising the things that make the biggest difference to our communities

**Proud** – of West Lancashire as a place to live, work, visit and invest

### Priorities and Key Projects

#### Deliver tangible and visible improvements in the Borough, by:

- ❖ Completing the current review of the Local Plan
- ❖ Developing new leisure facilities as health and leisure hubs for the Borough
- ❖ Delivering retail, housing and public realm improvements with a focus on Skelmersdale Town Centre
- ❖ Establishing a Development Company, subject to the business case, to accelerate the build of housing and commercial property for rent and sale

#### Engage and empower our local communities, by:

- ❖ Delivering the Master Plan for Tawd Valley park, subject to resources, involving the community in planning and delivering improvements
- ❖ Piloting volunteer engagement at Abbey Lakes, and exploring opportunities to roll out this approach to other countryside parks in the Borough
- ❖ Facilitating the asset transfer of existing leisure facilities in North Meols, working with the owners of this facility and local communities
- ❖ Deliver digital inclusion initiatives, to encourage self-service and further strengthen customer service









#### Actively promote the Borough as a great place to live, work, visit and invest, by:























- ❖ Promoting the Council's role and West Lancashire's achievements through a new digital communications strategy, complementing traditional approaches
- ❖ Roll out 'place branding' and continue to develop the websites for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale
- ❖ Continue to engage with Liverpool City Region and Lancashire authorities, to bring benefits to West Lancashire
- ❖ Engaging businesses and communities in enhancing and promoting Ormskirk, Burscough and Skelmersdale, including through the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group and Skelmersdale Place Board

Organisational Sustainability Review














## APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2014/15–2017/18

Icon key	
	On target (within 0.01%) or exceeded
	Off target (within 5%)
	Off target (by 5% or more)
	Data only (no target)
	Performance improved on previous year
	Performance declined on previous year
	No change on previous year
	Comparison not possible

Performance Indicator	Results 2014/15-2017/18				Targets 2017-18	2016/17 vs 2017/18	2017/18 Result	Note
	2014/15 Value	2015/16 Value	2016/17 Value	2017/18 Value	Annual 2017/18			
ICT1 Severe Business Disruption (Priority 1)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.0%			
ICT3 Major Business Disruption (P2)	100.0%	92.0%	96.0%	100.0%	98.0%			
ICT2 Minor Business Disruption (P3)	99.0%	98.0%	98.0%	99.0%	97.0%			
ICT4 Minor Disruption (P4)	99.0%	98.0%	99.0%	99.0%	98.0%			
ICT5 Advice & Guidance (P5)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.0%			
B1 Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events(days)	6.62	7.02	6.41	5.63	12.00			
B2 Overpayment Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (payments received)	£203,868	£276,577	£311,409	£294,695	£195,000			
B4 Benefits Local authority Error Overpayments - Lower threshold	£86,090	£82,401	£96,867	£76,048	£123,371			
R1 % of Council Tax collected	96.03%	97.02%	96.74%	96.51%	97.10%			Annual outturn equates to a shortfall of approximately £350k against a total annual liability of £59m. Direct impact of this to WLBC is 13% (£45k).
R2 % council tax previous years arrears collected	33.56%	37.31%	26.82%	26.78%	24.5%			
R3 % of Non-domestic Rates Collected	96.40%	98.32%	97.72%	98.18%	97.20%			

R4 Sundry Debtors % of revenue collected against debt raised	90.73%	95.00%	95.06%	95.78%	89.1%			
BV8 % invoices paid on time	98.22%	98.81%	98.48%	98.50%	98.75%			Data relates to 40,134 invoices processed during the year
CIT01 % feel West Lancs is safe & secure to live	78%	79%	79%	78%				
CIT02 % satisfied with cleanliness of streets	69%	65%	56%	54%				
CIT03 % satisfied with how WLBC runs things	68%	62%	57%	48%				
CIT05 % satisfied with local area as a place to live	82%	78%	80%	74%				
CIT06 % satisfied with sports/leisure facilities	42%	41%	27%	30%				
CIT07 % satisfied with parks and open spaces	58%	60%	52%	50%				
CIT08 % residents agreeing that WLBC provides value for money	43%	41%	35%	30%				
CIT12 % of people satisfied with household collections for domestic waste	83%	86%	85%	86%				
CIT13 % of people satisfied with household collections for recyclable materials	82%	82%	78%	79%				
CIT14 % of residents who feel the Council keeps them well informed about its services and benefits	57%	50%	49%	42%				
ER01 Apprenticeships created from Council intervention	~	~	27	15				
ER04 Apprenticeship vacancies within the borough	~	~	254	182				Apprenticeships advertised within West Lancs.
ER05 Benefit claimant count in West Lancs	~	~	1.9%	1.9%				Information comes from DWP administrative data.
HS13 % LA properties with Landlord Gas Safety Record outstanding	0.10%	0.13%	0.19%	0.49%	0.00%			Significant work during the year has improved processes. This had reduced to 1 property as at 25 April.
HS14 % non-decent council homes	0.39%	0.30%	0.25%	0.07%	0.25%			4 properties
HS1 % Housing repairs completed in timescale	96.56%	96.39%	97.22%	97.37%	97.00%			

NI 154 Net additional homes provided	239	266	305	177				236 total homes, demolitions/losses 59
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	16	92	95	71				
NI 157a Processing of planning applications: Major applications	76.09%	95.12%	87.10%	97.22%	65.00%			Relates to 36 applications determined in the year
NI 157b Processing of planning applications: Minor applications	73.88%	67.31%	88.85%	88.31%	75.00%			Relates to 248 applications determined in the year. Target and outturn is above government target of 65%
NI 157c Processing of planning applications: Other applications	81.99%	82.71%	90.56%	93.05%	85.00%			Relates to 561 applications determined in the year. Target and outturn is above government target of 80%
NI 159 Supply of ready to develop housing sites	120.5%	108.3%	106.3%	P				
NI 191 Residual household waste per household (Kg)	502.59	513.15	504.95	P	500.00			Data pending from external source. Figures relate to data reported for (not validated during) the quarters April 2017-March 2018.
NI 192 Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	46.29%	46.80%	47.38%	P	50.00%			As above.
NI 195a Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Litter	0.83%	1.44%	0.80% <sup>R</sup>	0.76%	1.61%			<sup>R</sup> Previously reported as 1.03%
NI 195b Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Detritus	4.77%	4.95%	2.16%	4.37%	5.00%			
TS1 Rent Collected as a % of rent owed (excluding arrears b/f)	98.65	99.81	99.09	99.48	99.00			
TS11% of rent loss through dwellings being vacant	1.69%	1.75%	1.79%	1.59%	2.00%			
WL_121 Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence	8.74	9.64	7.44	8.28	8.08			Direct HR support for stage 1 and 2 interviews and training for attendance management as requested is anticipated to improve performance.
WL01 No. residual bins missed per 100,000 collections	84.26	89.83	76.81	93.98	80.00			Route optimisation work currently underway is anticipated to improve performance.
WL06 Average time taken to remove fly tips (days)	1.09	1.06	1.03	1.04	1.09			1,216 reports compared to 1,207 in previous year
WL08a Number of Crime Incidents	4,971	4,765	5,170	6,004				
WL_18 Use of leisure and cultural facilities (swims and visits)	1,203,074	1,164,957	1,213,806	1,229,850				

WL24 % Building regulations applications determined within 5 weeks	61.64%	61.98%	62.20%	51.00%	50.00%			202 decisions made. 100% of the decisions were made within the two months of submission.
WL90 % of Contact Centre calls answered	92.4%	92.0%	93.0%	83.1%	91.0%			Performance has been heavily impacted by an unprecedented level of calls around the first green waste subscription service, changes to bin collections and the new subscription period for 2018. Outturn relates to 123,448 calls into the contact centre in 2017/18, compared with 102,646 in 2016/17.
WL108 Average answered waiting time for callers to the contact centre (seconds)	30	51	60	145	60			As above.
WL122 % Vehicle Operator Licence Inspections Carried Out within 6 Weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			
WL123 Apprenticeships Started Each Year Within WLBC	~	~	~	0.17%	2.30%	~		New for 2017/18.
WL19bii Direct dial calls answered within 10 seconds	81.98%	81.34%	81.23%	80.26%	82.21%			Relates to 191,680 calls during the year.

### General notes on the 2017/18 suite

WLBC continues to collect certain PIs originating from the previous Best Value and National Indicator sets for its own performance management purposes although national reporting no longer exists. Satisfaction PIs (CIT\_) are collected through the West Lancashire Citizen Survey. PIs and targets are reviewed annually and agreed by Cabinet. Data that is pending will be published when available on the council website.

### Annual Report in other formats

The Annual Report can be provided upon request in other formats including audiotape, CD, in large print, Braille and other languages. Telephone 01695 577177 or visit our website [www.westlancs.gov.uk](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk)