

COUNCIL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



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Version: 05.07.2019

Introduction

We have set out to be a Council that is ambitious for West Lancashire – our Economy, Environment and for Health and Wellbeing. Our determination to deliver on this is evident throughout this report.

In recent years, as well as focusing on operations, we've had to be creative about how we deliver services, such as through digital initiatives and drawing on the capabilities of other organisations and the community. In this way we have reduced spending – a necessity since without those changes the only alternative was a reduction in services.

Last year I outlined the need to redesign and reshape our services so that they can continue to meet the needs of our customers. With that in mind, we took a significant decision to explore how we operate as a whole enterprise and review our processes as well as our culture. The initial outcomes of this work will come to Council in July, and I hope that staff, Councillors and customers embrace the opportunities and new ways of working that this new operating model will bring.

Being careful with our budget does not mean that we don't invest or innovate. Our new development company, Tawd Valley Developments Ltd, was given the green light in February. Initial plans will see 77 homes built in Skelmersdale, with 48 to be retained for our own stock. It also gives me a huge amount of satisfaction that after many years of determined effort funding has now been agreed for the construction of the first phase of development and Council officers are working with our partners

Homes England and St Modwen to facilitate a commencement of works on site. This is an exciting time for Skelmersdale with further plans for additional public realm works and the Tawd Valley park masterplan well underway. Proposals are also in preparation for new leisure centres in both Skelmersdale and Ormskirk and improvements to Burscough Racquet and Fitness Centre.

We also have a wide range of schemes moving forward or in the planning stages for attracting businesses to West Lancs, particularly through the successful Skelmersdale Ambassadors group, and encouraging visitors to Ormskirk and the wider area such as through the Gateway projects, the work of the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group and the expanded Chapel Gallery visitor offer.

We know that our staff are supportive of our priorities and with the plans we have in place this puts us in a great position moving into 2019/20 to achieve our ambitions. I am confident that in another twelve months, we will be celebrating substantial progress and further success.

Councillor Ian Moran
Leader of West Lancashire Borough Council

Chief Executive's Review

Headlines about Councils failing to balance budgets and cutting services have become familiar reading. Here at West Lancs, due to robust and sustained action, we have rightly had no reason to attract that kind of publicity. In the last nine years we have made savings and generated additional income amounting to more than £10 million. Despite this, the Council still needs to save or raise additional income of £1.9 million by 2021/22 to meet the budget gap created by reductions in central government and other external funding. My role is to ensure that this organisation has a sustainable future and is capable of delivering services fit for purpose. A significant part of that will be achieved through our Sustainable Organisation Review Project (SORP).

During the year we have worked through an intense and structured process utilising the experience of consultants RedQuadrant. Their expert and impartial evaluation has been balanced along the way by the detailed organisational and local knowledge of Councillors, managers and staff. Towards the end of the year we began to finalise phase 3 of the work, 'focus and prioritise', and are on track to put the recommendations to Council in the summer as planned, ahead of public consultation. SORP has not been about needing a 'quick fix' for the organisation, since due to previous years' planning and focus on savings, efficiencies and income we are in good financial shape. It is however about applying decisive, large value measures that release innovation, efficiency and maximum resource at the earliest opportunity so we are in the best position for when final changes to Council funding frameworks come into force.

Whilst there is a continued focus on service improvement, it is also critical to maintain good governance in our current working practices and we

were pleased once more to receive positive feedback from our External Auditors in this regard.

A priority I had highlighted for the year was to improve communications for residents and staff, and we have been applying a more holistic approach to this. We have boosted our online presence providing additional channels for customers to access information about services, and through the launch of our 'customer account' facility we have given people more ownership of their service queries. Our services impact on so many areas of people's lives, and we are always conscious with any changes about considering the impact on customer experience.

We have also begun to implement many of the suggestions and solutions from our staff survey. During the year, we launched our Expected Behavioural Standards which will benefit not only colleagues within the organisation, but customers' experience of engaging with the Council. We will continue to engage staff in the running of the Council, and it was pleasing that the most recent staff survey showed staff to have increased their sense of being proud to work for the Council, being committed to our aims and objectives and feeling that the Council is a good organisation to work for.

It is always a pleasure to take stock of our achievements. I hope you find this report both helpful and informative. We will continue to work with statutory and non-statutory groups, communities and our Lancashire and city region neighbours, to deliver the ambitious agenda for the Borough.

Kim Webber
Chief Executive

Our Priorities 2018/19

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

Focussed – 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

Priority: Deliver Tangible and Visible Improvements in the Borough

A number of projects were identified to help achieve this ambition. Highlights of the progress made in 2018/19 are given below.

Completing the review of the Local Plan

The review processes and timescales for West Lancashire's Local Plan are outlined within the Local Development Scheme. Although the current Local Plan is in place until 2027, we are reviewing now so that we are in a position to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the region, maintain a long-term supply of deliverable sites for development to enable economic growth in the borough, and to address the new requirements of the revised National Planning Policy Framework to review Local Plans every five years. During the year, we completed the public consultation on a Preferred Options document, which concluded in December 2018. This involved a series of public events where people were able to discuss issues with planning officers as well as feedback through our dedicated consultation pages on our website.

The Preferred Options document received around 1600 comments

The Council will now be considering the timetable for the Local Plan review through an updated Local Development Scheme, including further public consultation on an amended Local Plan document in 2019.

Developing new leisure facilities as leisure and wellbeing hubs

Our leisure facilities are the biggest assets we have for supporting and encouraging people of all ages to live active lives and enjoy healthy lifestyles. Significant improvements for the borough's facilities are progressing through plans for replacement leisure facilities in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. Over the last twelve months, key actions have included continuing our collaborative working with the West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group around options for incorporating health services into the facilities, further developing contract specifications and completing a successful soft market testing exercise to substantiate our plans. As well as replacement facilities, we are also planning for improvements to Burscough Racquet and Fitness Centre. These are substantial projects with long lasting benefits for communities and as such will involve community consultation as the plans progress.

- *7,854 people took part in health improvement activities (sport, art, countryside)*
- *1,115,594 annual visitors to leisure centres & swimming pools*

Delivering retail, housing and public realm improvements with a focus on Skelmersdale Town Centre

Plans for our main scheme in Skelmersdale made significant progress during the year with Council securing funding to deliver the £19 million first phase to extend Skelmersdale town centre. The funding enabled plans for the construction of Phase 1 of the approved retail and leisure scheme, and associated public realm works to be finalised. Plans for the town centre include extensive improvements to the public realm, including a new pedestrian link between the college and the Concourse Shopping Centre, as well as enhancements to the public areas outside the library and Nye Bevan Pool. The Council is also continuing to work with owners of the Concourse Shopping Centre to help realise their plans for a multi-screen cinema and to look at further improvements to the Concourse and its surroundings.

An estimated 70 permanent and 240 temporary construction jobs will be created through the Skelmersdale town centre regeneration

Establishing a Development Company

In February 2019, the Council evidenced its ambitions for driving growth in the borough with the creation of a new development company, Tawd Valley Developments Ltd. Wholly-owned by the Council, and operating out of the West Lancashire Investment Centre, profits will be returned directly to the Council. The concept stemmed from the expertise and experience gained through recent Council regeneration projects.

The company's main objectives will be to acquire and develop sites for residential and commercial development, so that we can be more directly involved in bringing investment and growth to the borough and enabling employment and skills training opportunities in the construction industry. A board will oversee the running of the company and each year Council will agree the annual business plan. Council will be kept up to date with progress through quarterly performance reports. The company has begun operation and plans are in place to build up to 340 homes over the next 5 years, from January 2020. This includes the first phase of 77 good quality homes in Skelmersdale, with 48 to be retained by the Council for social housing.

Other work streams have supported this priority, for example the **Beechtrees scheme** (Skelmersdale) for 36 council homes and **Walmsley Drive** (Ormskirk) for 19 new homes for sale and the rest being added to our housing stock. These have both been under construction during the year and are due to complete in the first half of this year. We took extra care to ensure that the six **war memorials** owned by the Council were clean, tidy and in a good state of repair ahead of the 100th anniversary of the ending of World War One. In Up Holland, this included equal contributions from the Parish Council for re-gilding work. Our new **Clean and Green service** was launched with accompanying service standards and new neighbourhood teams, equipped to deliver a wide range of tasks within an area.

Priority: Engage and Empower Our Local Communities

A number of projects were identified to help achieve this ambition. Highlights of the progress made in 2018/19 are given below.

Delivering the Tawd Valley Park Master Plan

The Tawd Valley Masterplan is a success story of partners working with the local community to deliver what is needed by the community. Actions during the year centred around the development of contract specifications for major infrastructure works in the Park, establishing a dedicated staffing input and community support via a Friends of Tawd Valley group, and a Team Tawd action group, and sourcing funding to progress works on the ground. The volunteer support boosted our regeneration work with over 200 volunteers and 1,200 volunteer hours. Involvement has come from the community, local businesses, college and schools. Tasks include woodland management, litter picking, planting trees and hedges, creating paths, upgrading an angling pond, building bridges and creating a new community orchard as part of National Tree Week.

We will continue to promote the fantastic work being done and our future plans through Tawd.net and @ParkTawd, which were launched in September. To date active involvement on the ground has come from the Council and crucially for the success of the venture, a wide range of other partner organisations and volunteers. The Council and its partners are continuing to work to build on the £1.2m already secured. This strong progress to date was acknowledged by Council in February when extra support was

confirmed, allowing for a new dedicated ranger post to support community engagement and works on the ground.

Follow us @ParkTawd and Tawd.net

Piloting volunteer engagement at Abbey Lakes and exploring opportunities to roll out this approach

We have explored alternative ways to maintain and develop our parks and countryside sites for wider economic and social value whilst minimising the draw on Council resources. Volunteering is of major benefit for the project and whilst working with the Parks and Countryside Ranger service the volunteers are able to gain new skills whilst upgrading the sites. During the year, a volunteering policy was established, setting out the principles for volunteering and providing a framework for best practice when appointing, managing and supporting all our volunteers.

Volunteering has been taken forward through the 'friends' groups for Tawd Valley (Skelmersdale), Richmond Park (Burscough) and Coronation Park (Ormskirk). New volunteer/Friends groups are now planned for Burscough Brickpits and Hunters Hill in Hilldale, and volunteer activity at Abbey lakes is about to re-commence following a recess over the winter months.

Facilitating the asset transfer of existing leisure facilities in North Meols

During the year, detailed work with our key partners Department of Health, West Lancs Community Leisure, North Meols Parish Council (NMPC) and the West Lancashire Sports Partnership produced costed options for a viable community transfer. Council agreed the proposal for NMPC to shadow Serco in the operation of the leisure facility starting in June 2019. If this period is successful, NMPC's control of the lease for the facility could begin in April 2020 subject to successful negotiation with the Department of Health. The Parish Council's local knowledge will help move the facility into a more community focussed operating model. The transfer will also assist the wider aims of the Leisure Strategy, by rationalising the existing leisure provision and focusing on a sustainable leisure provision through the proposed Leisure and Wellbeing Hubs in Ormskirk and Skelmersdale and the refurbishment of Burscough Racquet and Fitness Centre.

Deliver Digital Inclusion Initiatives, to encourage self-service and further strengthen customer service

As we adopt more efficient ways of working with a focus on digital, we know that in designing these changes we will be meeting the expectations of many people. We are mindful however that for some customers more established contact methods will need to be retained, and for others who are able, but not yet enabled, we have our digital inclusion workstream. Through this, we want to develop confidence in basic online skills which when applied to council services, can then take the pressure off our traditional access routes.

In our wider community leader role, since some government services and many lifestyle opportunities are only accessible digitally, it is more important than ever that we are able to help people get online.

We gave direct help to 452 individuals for Personal Budgeting Support and 92 for Assisted Digital Support

During the year we supported Get Online week with community events in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. The learning tool Learn My Way was used to help people take their first steps online, such as using search engines, finding a job, and using public services online. We will also be making the most of the Wi-Fi in our sheltered schemes by holding 'Tech and Tea Party' mornings to encourage online use.

We can't help tackle digital inclusion alone and, with CVS and Citizen's Advice Lancashire West, we are involved with putting the forthcoming free online training at the Digital Health Hub through the Buzz-IT programme.

28% of tenants now pay by direct debit

There are other work streams supporting this priority. We launched our new **Customer Portal** in early March 2019. This is transforming how we do business with our customers since users are able to track progress of service requests and interact directly with officers online without the need to call or come into the Council.

Over 4,000 customer self service accounts were created in the first month

The **More Positive Together** programme is a Lancashire-wide project directed at people in those areas in greater need to improve their health, activity levels, skills and employability. Since the start of the project in June 2018, the MPT team in West Lancashire have engaged with over 200 individuals and developed a referral network of 30 different partner agencies representing a wide cross-section of statutory, community, health and third sector organisations. The website mptwestlancs.org was launched in early 2019. The Council held **candidate and agent briefing sessions** in March ahead of the local May elections covering what prospective candidates needed to know about the election process.

12 Community Engagement events held to promote relationships between agencies and the community

Priority: Actively Promote the Borough as a Great Place to Live, Work, Visit and Invest

We have made considerable progress in this priority, particularly in the key projects for 2018/19 outlined below.

Engaging businesses and communities in enhancing and promoting Ormskirk and Skelmersdale

As part of the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group, we continue to meet quarterly to oversee the strategic plans for improving Ormskirk. The annual Ormskirk town centre stakeholder event was held in April for all stakeholders including local businesses and involving Google's Digital Garage running a session on digital marketing. Picking up on the interest that generated, two more Google digital marketing events were held over the summer to help businesses further develop digital promotion of their business. Key Ormskirk events in 2018 included the Gingerbread Festival in July and the improved Christmas lights switch on event, boosted by the £10,000 worth of lights won through Blachere Illuminations Christmas Lights Competition.

- *Ormskirk town centre ground floor units vacancy rate 8.1% (national rate 10.4%; regional 12%)¹*
- *Ormskirk town centre independent retail units 68.4% (national average 35.9%; regional 61.9%)¹*

¹ January 2019 – Springboard

Meanwhile Skelmersdale has been championed through the Skelmersdale Place Board and Skelmersdale Ambassadors. Mark Whitworth, CEO of Peel Ports was appointed as Chair of the Skelmersdale Place Board in January and will continue the work to promote Skelmersdale as a great place for business. A marketing strategy and action plan will now be progressed. Over the last twelve months the Ambassadors network has further developed its popular business breakfast events, shining the spotlight on a number of Skelmersdale businesses and key speakers covering topics such as the vision for the network, Peel Ports, Liverpool2, Lancashire Enterprise Advisers Network, the Local Plan and Skelmersdale town centre plans. To ensure this is a sustainable group we introduced paid membership commencing from January.

Follow us on twitter @ltskelmersdale and linkedin.com/skelmersdale

Rolling out 'place branding' and developing the websites for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale

The *Discover Ormskirk* website and supporting Instagram and Facebook pages continue to highlight attractions, shops and events in the town and wider area. Logins have been provided to a number

of event providers so they can add their own relevant events, for example Burscough Wharf's Artisan Market. When searching for "Ormskirk" on Google, the average listing position of Discover Ormskirk has been 5.6 on the first page of results and social media posts on Discover Ormskirk have high levels of engagement². Also boosting Ormskirk's digital presence is the Chapel Gallery website, which has been re-built and now allows online booking for selected events. Footfall in Ormskirk generally follows national and regional trends although it does outperform these on a number of occasions. Events are targeted for when footfall is traditionally low, such as on Sundays, resulting in a significant footfall increase.

- *September was the busiest month for footfall in Ormskirk with over 600,000 visits*
- *27,891 visits to DiscoverOrmskirk.com*

The business-focussed *Let's Talk Skelmersdale* website, and supporting LinkedIn page, continues to feature Skelmersdale's strengths as a place to do business by sharing news, providing information for business support, employment and skills, lifestyle and education.

- *4,428 visits to LetstalkSkelmersdale.com*

² over 4% on most posts, where the median across industry is 0.16% in 2018 Source: <https://www.rivaliq.com/blog/2019-social-media-benchmark-report>

Promoting the Council's role and West Lancashire's achievements

During the year, we have taken steps to revisit how we listen and converse with our customers. We are developing a less formal Council 'voice' for our customers as demographics and expectations of contact with organisations evolve, whilst retaining the dependability associated with our brand. Key campaigns during the year have been around garden waste resubscriptions and promoting voter registration.

Join over 5,000 followers on @westlancsbc

We have increased our use of twitter, including re-tweeting partner organisation information that has value to our customers, is in line with our council priorities and helps celebrate life in West Lancs. We now have an established base of followers on twitter who regularly like and share content.

At the tail end of the year we claimed the unofficial Facebook page and have been working to make it one of our key communication channels. Although the number of followers are small at present they are building organically. Both twitter and Facebook lend themselves to communicating in a more visual way other than a formal written style.

Our focus is on ensuring service access and council achievements are well publicised and understood. An example of this is the 'voice of the customer' sessions that were integral in developing our new customer contact system that was began its phased implementation in March 2019.

- 69,607 online payments through the website
- 657,969 visits to the www.westlancls.gov.uk

Engaging with Liverpool City Region and Lancashire authorities

We are keen to maintain collaborative working across the county and look forward to joint working arrangements developing further. West Lancs' Chief Executive chairs the Lancashire Economic Development Officers Group, which was reformed in November 2018 to service the Lancashire Leaders' Economic Development Theme Group, and it is expected that officer support will be given to the development of a Lancashire Strategy. The Council is a member of Growth Lancashire and the Leader sits on the board. Given the potential benefits to the Borough from nearby Liverpool, we continue to participate as an associate member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and have joined Visit Liverpool to assist with marketing the borough. The Planning Portfolio Holder attends meetings of the Liverpool City Region Housing and Spatial Planning Advisory Body. Officers also attend meetings of Chief Planning Officers in both Lancashire and the Liverpool City Region.

Other work streams that support this priority include our work to improve the condition of our housing stock, achieving a 0.68 % of **non-decent Council Homes** or around four of our homes. We have also made good progress with our **apprenticeship work**. This year the Council exceeded its statutory target creating 8 new apprenticeships within the council and providing management and Team Leading apprenticeships to 12 existing members of staff.

Around 4% of the workforce are undertaking apprenticeship training.

As part of our role in supporting skills and employment initiatives, we also work with local businesses to advise them on how to recruit apprentices. Since October 2015 the Council has supported the creation of 55 apprenticeships in small and medium-sized enterprises across West Lancashire. The **Chapel Gallery** in Ormskirk puts on a range of events across the year for all ages including the annual Lancashire Open competition, art exhibitions, workshops, creative sessions for children in holidays, an Enjoy Life! Programme including learn a language, improve your writing skills or making jewellery.

*We retained **Green Flag awards** for Beacon Country Park (Skelmersdale) and Coronation Park (Ormskirk) Beacon Country Park achieved the highest possible score in this year's Green Flag Award.*

Managing the Budget

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 £49,000 was achieved in 2018/19, or 0.4% 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 £1.9m by 2021/22, which would represent around 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 whose results will be reported to Council in July 2019. 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 £1.73m, or 6.8%, 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

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. We also include information that helps demonstrate that we are operating as an efficient organisation.

From the performance information available, 72% of targets for available PIs in the suite were met or exceeded in 2018/19, with 56% of available outturns where comparison is possible 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

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. The following is a selection of events and actions from throughout the year, many of them dependent on working with other organisations, and improving the operation of our own organisation.

April 2018

- The annual **Ormskirk town centre business stakeholder event** had a focus on digital marketing and was hosted by the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group. It was attended by around 30 companies.
- Chapel Gallery promoted the **Lempen Puppet Theatre: Cardboard Carnival** for children.
- A **Skelmersdale Ambassador Network event** welcomed over 60 representatives of local businesses and organisations.
- The **Prince's Trust team 16 Ormskirk**, delivered through West Lancashire College, helped our Rangers create a fairy door trail through the woodland at Coronation Park (Ormskirk), as part of a community project.

May 2018

- Active West Lancs promoted the Lancashire-wide **Your Mile Your Way** day aiming to get Lancashire residents the equivalent of round the World in a Day.
- **Local elections** for 18 of our wards were held with a turnout of 36%.
- The **War Horse Route**, one of West Lancashire's most popular walks, was re-launched to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One.
- Examples of sights, smells, sounds and tastes of what life was like 900 years ago were on display at the two-day Ormskirk **Medieval Festival** at Coronation Park.
- We supported community groups clean up their neighbourhoods as part of the national **Great Plastic Pick Up campaign** involving Keep Britain Tidy.

June 2018

- West Lancashire **Armed Forces Day** on 25 June was marked at the War Memorial in Ormskirk's Coronation Park paying tribute to veterans and those who are currently serving in our armed forces.
- Weekly community **Team Tawd Eco days** were launched for Tawd Valley Park led by the Council's Parks and Countryside Ranger Service to help with conservation and maintenance.
- Divine Days Community Arts ran the **4th Annual Ormskirk Dance Festival** in Coronation Park supported by our Park Rangers. Hundreds of dancers entertained on the day with performances ranging from street dance and musical theatre to contemporary dance.
- Brown bins were introduced for the collection of garden waste and green bins for paper and cardboard.

July 2018

- Ormskirk's third **Gingerbread Festival** was organised by Ormskirk Community Partnership and West Lancashire Borough Council, supported by the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group and Ormskirk businesses.
- Skelmersdale Ambassadors held a **business breakfast event** at West Lancashire College where attendees heard from influential guest speakers and took a tour of the new Construction, Engineering and Logistics Centre.
- **By-elections** were held on 19 July in Hesketh-with-Beaconsall Ward (turnout 37.82%) and on 26 July in Knowsley Ward (turnout 34.58%).
- The **Green Fayre** was held on 21-22 July in Beacon Country Park.

October 2018

- Three **Silent Soldier Silhouettes** from the Royal British Legion were placed at the war memorials in Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Burscough to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One.
- Tanhouse Ward held a **by-election** on 11 October with a turnout of 18.9%.
- Council approved the appointment of the consultancy firm RedQuadrant after a competitive tendering process to take

August 2018

- The popular **Ormskirk Motorfest** event was held at the end of August. Organised by Aintree Circuit Club, the event is supported by the Council.
- West Lancashire residents were encouraged to get involved in **Community Action Days** in Tanhouse, Birch Green, Little Digmoor, Moorside, Digmoor and Scott Estate. Organised by West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership working with the Borough Council, Police, Fire Service and other agencies.
- Views were sought from gambling establishments and residents on the Council's policy for licensing gambling premises across the Borough. The new **Statement of Gambling policy** was introduced in January 2019.

November 2018

- The Council joined in with the Local Government Association's **#OurDay** event that gives everyone who works or volunteers in local public services the chance to spread the word on what they do to improve the quality of life of residents.
- The Council launched its **in-house bulky household waste collection service**.
- Ormskirk's **Christmas Gingerbread Market and Christmas Lights switch on** was held on 25 November.

September 2018

- The Annual flag raising ceremony to mark **Merchant Navy Day** was held on 3 September attended by the Mayor, Councillors, ex-service personnel, the Town Crier, Director of Development and Regeneration and members of the public.
- A new **Volunteers Policy** was put in place for recruiting and working with volunteers to support the work of the Council.
- We supported **Gas Safety Week** by sharing some top tips for local residents highlighting the importance of gas safety.
- Chapel Gallery's **Lancashire Open Exhibition** with a Celebrate Summer theme ran for three months and showcased 203 diverse artworks from over 100 artists.

December 2018

- Skelmersdale **Christmas lights switch on** was held at the Concourse shopping centre.
- Our CCTV Monitoring Service provided by Enigma Security won **Enigma Security Team of the year**.
- The **Chapel Gallery** held the Festival of Tales and Opening the Gates exhibitions, as well as free activities to learn about photography and filmmaking between Christmas and New Year.

forward the **Sustainable Organisation Review Project**.

- For **Local Democracy Week**, the Mayor welcomed groups of young people to the Council Chamber for a day which included debates and mock voting exercises.
- The **Free Tree Scheme** 2018 was launched providing a fruit tree and packet of 'Flanders Poppy' seeds helping improve the Borough's environment and attract more wildlife into local people's gardens.

January 2019

- A free 10 week programme of **Active Weight Courses** began in various venues including in Burscough, Up Holland Skelmersdale, Ormskirk, and Parbold.
- The **Burscough Parish Neighbourhood Plan** six-week consultation period was launched, with 39 responses received by the close.
- The **Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy** used as a means to safeguard the travelling public and to support the licensed trade was opened up for public consultation.
- Cabinet agreed s.106 monies for the new **shared cycle/footpath** between the rail and bus stations in Ormskirk.

- After demonstrating a high quality service to an external audit, the **Building Control Service** was subsequently awarded United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) Accredited **ISO 9001:2015** Certification.
- A revised **Housing Allocation Policy** was adopted after public consultation to support making the best possible use of our housing to meet people's needs.

February 2019

- **New play apparatus** was installed in Stanley Coronation Park, for ages 13+ and complementing the existing play provision for younger children and outdoor gym equipment.
- We were **shortlisted for Council of the Year** in the 2019 UK Housing Awards, hosted by the Chartered Institute of Housing.
- The first wave of staff were set up with **Skype for Business** replacing landlines to provide a cheaper, more productive and effective working experience. The rollout was completed in May.
- A 16-week public **review of all polling districts and polling places** across the Borough was begun.

- Volunteers and students from local schools and colleges joined our Rangers and the Friends of Tawd Valley Park to create a new **community orchard** of heritage varieties of fruit trees on a previously plain field.
- December's **full Council meeting** met and made decisions including on Budget Update (Business Rate Reliefs, Council Tax charges for homes empty for more than 2 years and the Council Tax Support Scheme) and Council Enforcement Policy.

March 2019

- As part of National Apprenticeship Week we celebrated our own success with apprenticeships (3.7% of the workforce this year) and held an **apprenticeship celebration event**.
- Championing the health and wellbeing needs of the workforce through **physical and mental wellbeing initiatives** a new staff steering group was established.
- A new Customer Relationship Management system with **online Customer Portal** was launched to improve both the customer and staff experience of the customer journey. Further phases are in development.

Strategy Review

A refreshed strategic Council Plan was developed for April 2019. A summary of the plan and projects is given below.

Council Plan 2019/20 - 2020/21

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

Focussed – 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 and improving leisure facilities as health and leisure hubs
- ❖ Delivering retail, housing and public realm improvements with a focus on Skelmersdale Town Centre
- ❖ Establishing a Development Company
- ❖ Creating the Moor Street Gateway
- ❖ Implementing the Route Optimisation Round Review and associated projects
- ❖ Implementing the new Clean & Green Service structure and deliver the new service standards

Engage and empower our local communities, by:

- ❖ Delivering the Master Plan for Tawd Valley park, subject to resources
- ❖ Seeking the asset transfer of existing leisure facilities in North Meols
- ❖ Delivering digital inclusion initiatives
- ❖ Implementing the Health and Wellbeing Strategy including involvement with the Integrated Community Partnership

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 including through digital communications
- ❖ Engaging businesses and communities to enhance and promote Ormskirk and the wider West Lancashire visitor economy
- ❖ Engaging with Liverpool City Region, Lancashire authorities and key decision makers
- ❖ Enhancing and promoting Skelmersdale and the wider West Lancashire business economy

APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2015/16–2018/19

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
~	Not collected and/or reported at this time or previous calculations not comparable

Performance Indicator	Results 2015/16 - 2018/19				2018/19 Target	2017/18 vs 2018/19	2018/19 Result	Note
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19				
	Value	Value	Value	Value				
ICT1 Severe Business Disruption (P1)	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%			
ICT3 Major Business Disruption (P2)	92%	96%	100%	100%	98%			
ICT2 Minor Business Disruption (P3)	98%	98%	99%	99%	97%			
ICT4 Minor Disruption (P4)	98%	99%	99%	99%	98%			
ICT5 Advice & Guidance (P5)	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%			
B1 Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	7.02	6.41	5.63	6.16	12.00			
B2 Overpayment Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (payments received)	£276,577	£311,409	£294,695	£370,939	£195,000			
B4 Benefits Local authority Error Overpayments - Lower threshold	£82,401	£96,867	£76,048	£49,034	£111,205			
R1 % of Council Tax collected	97.02%	96.74%	96.51%	96.46%	97.10%			
R2 % council tax previous years arrears collected	37.31%	26.82%	26.78%	25.88%	24.50%			
R3 % of Business Rates Collected (NNDR)	98.32%	97.72%	98.18%	98.22%	97.20%			

Performance Indicator	Results 2015/16 - 2018/19				2018/19	2017/18 vs 2018/19	2018/19 Result	Note
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19				
	Value	Value	Value	Value				
R4 Sundry Debtors % of revenue collected against debt raised	95%	95.06%	95.78%	96.95%	89.1%			
BV8 % invoices paid on time	98.81%	98.48%	98.50%	98.21%	98.75%			Relates to the processing of over 47,000 invoices compared to over 40,100 last year.
CIT01 % feel West Lancs is safe & secure to live	79%	79%	78%	~		/		The Citizen Survey was not carried out in 2018/19 as the timing for collection during the year has been moved from February to the end of May ¹ .
CIT02 % satisfied with cleanliness of streets	65%	56%	54%	~		/		As above.
CIT03 % satisfied with how WLBC runs things	62%	57%	48%	~		/		As above.
CIT05 % satisfied with local area as a place to live	78%	80%	74%	~		/		As above.
CIT06 % satisfied with sports/leisure facilities	41%	27%	30%	~		/		As above.
CIT07 % satisfied with parks and open spaces	60%	52%	50%	~		/		As above.
CIT08 % residents agreeing that WLBC provides value for money	41%	35%	30%	~		/		As above.
CIT12 % of people satisfied with household collections for domestic waste	86%	85%	86%	~		/		As above.
CIT13 % of people satisfied with household collections for recyclable materials	82%	78%	79%	~		/		As above.
CIT14 % of residents who feel the Council keeps them well informed about its services and benefits	50%	49%	42%	~		/		As above.
CIT16 % of residents feel that they belong to their local area	69%	72%	67%	~		/		As above.
ER01 Apprenticeships created from Council intervention	~	27	15	12				All funds to support apprenticeships were allocated.
ER04 Apprenticeship vacancies within the borough	~	254	182	62				Apprenticeships advertised in the area. Data relates only to first six months of the year due to staff resource.

Performance Indicator	Results 2015/16 - 2018/19				2018/19	2017/18 vs 2018/19	2018/19 Result	Note
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19				
	Value	Value	Value	Value				
ER05 Benefit claimant count in West Lancs	~	1.9%	1.9%	~		/		No data collected due to staff resource.
HS14 % non-decent council homes	0.30%	0.25%	0.07%	0.07%	0.20%			Equivalent to 4 properties. Reflecting the ongoing investment in the Housing Stock.
HS1 % Housing repairs completed in timescale	96.39%	97.22%	97.37%	95.22%	97.00%			Data currently includes repairs where tenants request completion after the target date, for example due to holiday, convenience etc
HS27 % of properties with a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record (homes and buildings)	~	~	~	100%	100.0%	/		New for 2018/19
HS28 % of properties with a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report (homes and buildings)	~	~	~	98.8%	100.0%	/		New for 2018/19. Properties identified that require electrical remedial work are currently under action with a target completion by end of June.
HS29 % non-domestic that require an asbestos management survey/re-inspection	~	~	~	100%	100.0%	/		New for 2018/19
HS30 % of non-domestic properties with fire risk assessment in place	~	~	~	100%	100.0%	/		New for 2018/19.
HS31 % of properties covered by water hygiene risk assessment (homes and buildings)	~	~	~	100%	100.0%	/		New for 2018/19
NI 154 Net additional homes provided	266	305	177	351				Monitored through the Local Plan
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	92	95	71	P				Data available from third party mid-end June.
NI 157a Processing of planning applications: Major applications	95.12%	87.10%	97.22%	97.56%	65.00%			Relates to 41 applications determined in the year.
NI 157b Processing of planning applications: Minor applications	67.31%	88.85%	88.31%	89.91%	75.00%			Relates to 218 applications determined in the year. Target and outturn is above government target of 65%
NI 157c Processing of planning applications: Other applications	82.71%	90.56%	93.05%	94.25%	85.00%			Relates to 557 applications determined in the year. Target and outturn is above government target of 80%

Performance Indicator	Results 2015/16 - 2018/19				2018/19	2017/18 vs 2018/19	2018/19 Result	Note
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19				
	Value	Value	Value	Value				
NI 159 Supply of ready to develop housing sites	108.3%	106.3%	105.5%	P				Monitored through the Local Plan
NI 191 Residual household waste per household (Kg)	513.15	493.94 +	500.32	P	500.00			Data pending from external source. Outturn figures will relate to data reported for (not validated during) the quarters April 2018-March 2019.
NI 192 Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	46.80%	48.53% +	42.95%	P	50.00%			As above.
NI 195a Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Litter	1.44%	0.80%	0.76%	1.28%	1.61%			
NI 195b Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Detritus	4.95%	2.16%	4.37%	3.72%	5.00%			
TS1 Rent Collected as a % of rent owed (excluding arrears b/f)	99.81	99.09	99.48	99.77	99.50			
TS11 % of rent loss through dwellings being vacant	1.75%	1.79%	1.59%	0.94%	1.90%			
WL121 Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence	9.64	7.44	8.28	9.87	8.08			Sickness Management Training has been delivered for Managers during May
WL01 No. residual bins missed per 100,000 collections	89.83	76.81	93.98	111.32	80.00			Data reported for the year is up to 8 March only due to the move to Service Now replacing existing collection mechanisms. This PI is replaced for 2019/20 with a new standard to better reflect fortnightly collections.
WL06 Average time taken to remove fly tips (days)	1.06	1.03	1.04	1.12	1.09			Data reported for the year is up to 8 March only due to the move to Service Now replacing existing collection mechanisms. This PI is replaced for 2019/20 with new Clean and Green standards.
WL18 Use of leisure and cultural facilities (swims and visits)	1,164,957	1,186,788+	1,229,850	P		/		Chapel Gallery data has not been available during the year. New collection mechanism will be in place for 2019/20.

Performance Indicator	Results 2015/16 - 2018/19				2018/19 Target	2017/18 vs 2018/19	2018/19 Result	Note
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19				
	Value	Value	Value	Value				
WL24 % Building regulations applications determined within 5 weeks	61.98%	62.20%	51.00%	50.00%	50.00%			This relates to 210 decisions made on Full Plan submissions. 97.6% of decisions were made within 2 months of the submission.
WL85a Website: no. visits	451,906	516,776	592,447	657,969				
WL85aa Website: number of unique visitors	301,624	344,140	389,646	442,467				
WL85b Website: use of online forms	13,084	11,204	13,581	15,541				
WL85c Website: no. online payments	40,353	45,134	73,679	69,607				
WL90 % of Contact Centre calls answered	92.0%	93.0%	81.7%	72.2%	88.0%			Outturn relates to 130,993 calls into the contact centre, compared with 123,448 in 2017/18.
WL108 Average answered waiting time for callers to the contact centre (seconds)	51	60	145	250	145			This is equivalent to 4 mins 10s.
WL122 % Vehicle Operator Licence Inspections Carried Out within 6 Weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			
WL123 % Apprenticeships Started Each Year Within WLBC	~	~	0.17%	3.70%	2.30%			Target is 2.3% headcount of the workforce.
WL124 Observations/incidents that CCTV operatives are involved in	~	6,045	5,633	5,509				New for 2018/19.
WL125 Arrests that CCTV operators were involved in	~	282	282	266				New for 2018/19.
WL126 No. incidents identified by CCTV operators in general monitoring	~	1,525	1,634	1,654				New for 2018/19.
WL19bii Direct dial calls answered within 10 seconds	81.34%	81.23%	80.26%	77.75%	80.26%			This relates to 195,524 calls received compared with 191,680 in 2018/19. The reported data does not include around 60 Skype early adopters from the end of February to end March.

General notes on the 2018/19 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. PIs and targets are reviewed annually and agreed by Cabinet. Data that is pending will be published when available on the council website.

¹ Our satisfaction survey results help us better understand how our services are perceived in the community. During 2018/19, the timing of the survey was reviewed and moved to May. This avoids restrictive timings due to purdah (as it will take place after the elections) and other key mailings such as Council Tax and annual canvas letters. The change meant that a survey did not fall within 2018/19.

+ Data restated since previous publication – NI191 2016/17 previously reported as 504.95; NI192 2016/17 previously reported as 47.38%. Both improved outturns due to corrected administrative error; WL_18 – 2016/17 figure revised from 1,213,806 due to a revision in the no. Chapel Gallery attendance
P data pending

Reporting of PIs is dependent on collection mechanisms remaining in place. Satisfaction (CIT_) indicators are collected via the Citizen & Stakeholder Survey.

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.

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