



WEST LANCASHIRE  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Plan  
Annual Report  
2020 - 2021



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# WELCOME

Welcome to the West Lancashire Borough Council Annual Report. The report reflects a refocused vision and priorities achieved with the engagement of our residents and stakeholders. In delivering our main priorities we aim to make everyone proud of their Council. We have begun to deliver the plans supporting these priorities but there is much more to come and we will build on these successes in the forthcoming year. Our Annual Report showcases our achievements across these priority areas during a challenging year where every service we provide had staff diverted to support our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



**VISION**  
West Lancashire together; the place of choice to live, work, visit and invest

**CREATE  
EMPOWERED,  
ENGAGED AND  
INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNITIES**

**SUPPORT  
BUSINESSES TO  
ADAPT AND  
PROSPER**

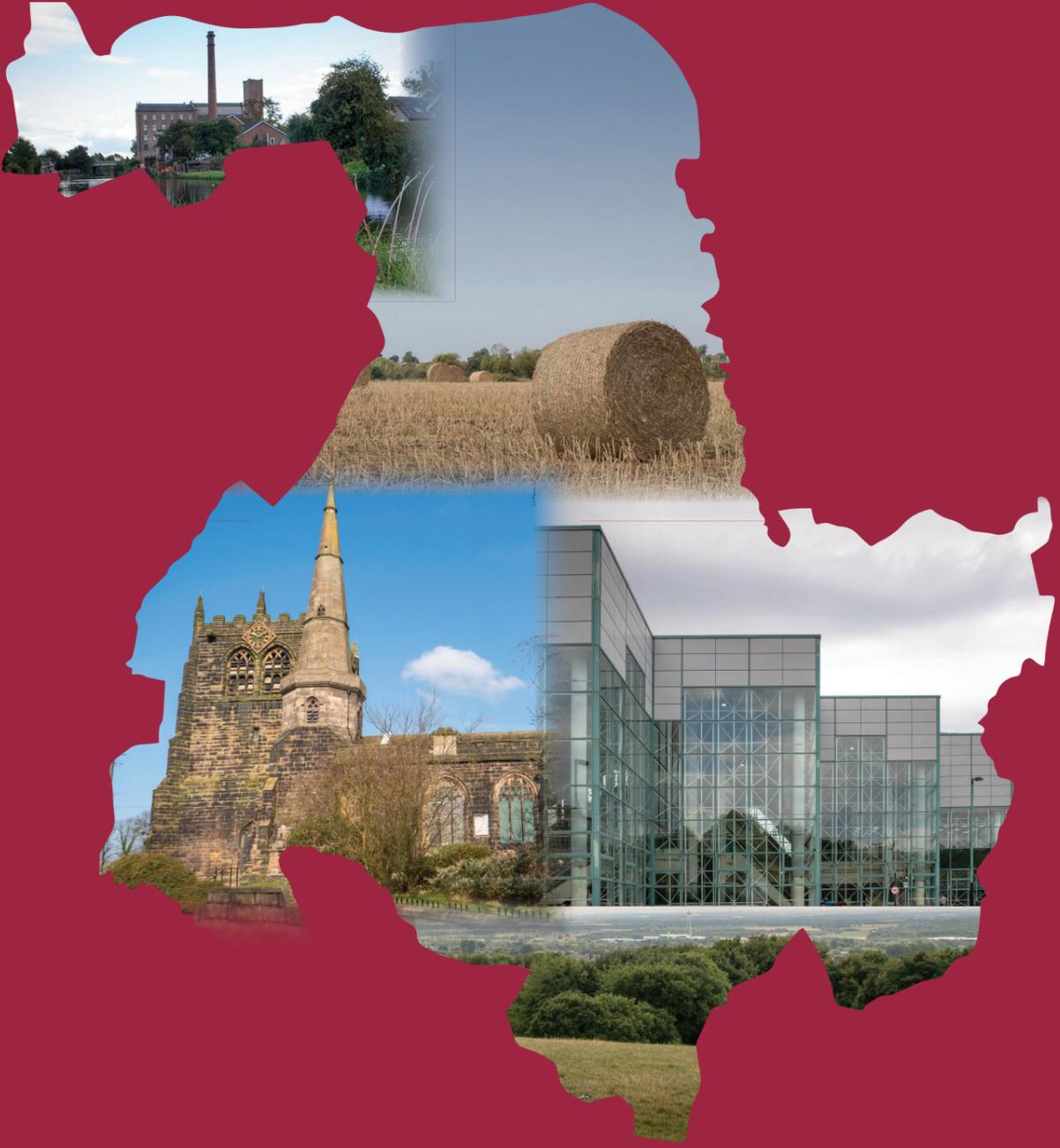
**BECOME A  
GREENER  
WEST LANCASHIRE**

**BE A FINANCIALLY  
SUSTAINABLE  
COUNCIL BY 2023**

**A CLEAN, SAFE  
ENVIRONMENT  
WITH AFFORDABLE  
HOMES TO BUY  
OR RENT FOR  
EVERYONE IN  
WEST LANCASHIRE**

**EVERYONE  
TO BE  
HEALTHY, HAPPY,  
SAFE AND  
RESILIENT**

**EVERYONE TO BE PROUD OF THEIR COUNCIL**



# INTRODUCTION

In a year like no other I am proud to look back at what we have achieved and to reflect on the co-operation across West Lancashire that went into the response to the COVID pandemic whilst serving our communities. Our thoughts remain with those who have lost loved ones or suffered loneliness and hardship as a result of the pandemic and although we are in a better place compared to this point last year we are still working in our communities to promote their safety and sustainability.



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

Despite COVID, life did carry on under the 'new normal' and we made headway with our long-term ambitions showing significant progress in many of our priorities. Key among these were the start of groundworks for Skelmersdale town centre regeneration. This has maintained progress and the scheme is forecast for completion in December 2021 with the first units open from Easter 2022. This will make a huge difference for the residents of Skelmersdale and the surrounding areas in the next 12 months. Amongst other work we also launched our Climate Action Plan; advanced with the construction of Council homes through the Tawd Valley Development Company; initiated the Kickstart programme which with partners provides a bespoke employability framework; and gained agreement on proposals to take forward Ormskirk's Eastern Gateway with LCC. We have also been successful in bidding for and securing grants for these and future projects which shows the belief and confidence that external bodies have in our plans.

Most of our outcomes are down to efforts involving teams from across the Council and in many cases partner organisations. Without this collaborative working it would not be possible to make the wide-ranging, positive changes that we do or to have mobilised the response to the pandemic.

I would like to thank all involved in Council services this year and their contribution to our vision of making West Lancashire the place of



**Chief Operating Officer**  
**Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey**

It's been a challenging twelve months with the impact on all of our communities from the COVID-19 pandemic. Public sector, third sector, businesses and individuals across West Lancashire rose to that challenge and with inspirational effort in many cases minimised loss of life and disruption whilst keeping life going as much as possible, and more importantly, safely.

As a Council we adapted services and working environments to ensure the safety of our staff and customers as well as providing new services such as the West Lancs Together helpline, running food and medication delivery services and distributing £33M business and just under £100K personal self-isolation grants through dedicated teams brought together from across the Council.

These are just a few of the additional support areas provided and it will be some years before the true impact of COVID is properly understood. Many of our services are of course very much in the community and hands on, however we can take as a positive that thanks to the creativity and flexibility of staff and the support from partners we now have arrangements in place so that for future continuity purposes more of our services can be operated remotely or as hybrid services.

This has clearly not been a usual year yet we have continued to deliver a programme of organisational transformation to re-imagine services and focus on delivering further value for money for our customers.

I hope the following report shows why I have confidence in our abilities to deliver for our borough even in the most difficult of circumstances. With the support of staff, councillors, partners, residents and businesses as West Lancashire Together I look forward to seeing our plans delivered.

# CREATE EMPOWERED, ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

## We want:

- **Healthy resilient and engaged communities that work together to improve the places they live and work**
- **Everyone to have the same opportunities**
- **Thriving voluntary and community groups that support innovation and collaboration**
- **To work with partners for the good of local people**
- **Our citizens to access the benefits of being digitally engaged**
- **Councillors that are active and knowledgeable and support change at a local level**
- **To improve customer satisfaction**

## DID YOU KNOW

We supported 19 local organisations with £134,750 grants through our Community Chest Grants and our Annual Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Small changes can result in a much better experience for the service user. I want to make sure we get even better at listening and including customer ideas and comments in the running and improvement of all our services.

*Debbie Johnson*  
Customer Engagement Officer

- ✓ **43% annual increase on Facebook and Twitter followers taking up our key messages**
- ✓ **546K visits to our main website**
- ✓ **£56.6K grants allocated to Voluntary Sector to help support COVID work**

Having the confidence and skills to get online and feel connected with friends and family or access shops and services has never been more important. We've teamed up with We Are Digital Ltd who, from June, will be providing an exciting project of 1-1 digital skills training to help residents to take their first digital steps or expand existing skills.



We have been successful in gaining £415K Community Champions grant. To ensure this funding is spent in the areas identified by residents we are working with West Lancs CVS. We will recruit and train local people to become community champions which will strengthen our links with communities and community groups.

The West Lancs Together helpline was set up as part of our COVID response to take telephone and online requests for food parcels, medication deliveries, access to priority supermarket slots for shielding residents and signposting for loneliness, digital inclusion and financial advice. Managed by our Customer Services team 15K+ outbound calls were made to vulnerable residents and 4,267 calls and 413 online enquiries taken. Initially available 7 days a week from 7am - 7pm the service continues with reduced hours to meet the lower risk.



We recognise the importance of staying connected and continue to support residents get online or improve their digital skills by: using the Learn My Way platform; through the annual Get Online Week; and 1-1 telephone support to residents to shop or bank safely online via West Lancs Together.

£117K Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grants from DEFRA was distributed to alleviate financial hardship for residents resulting from COVID to 12 local community groups and organisations including food banks. These groups received the grant to help with their critical support in tackling food poverty in their local communities.



Volunteering at our parks continued when possible with established community groups running restricted, COVID-safe sessions and clocking up 245 volunteer hours to help keep our parks and countryside in great shape.

In the Tawd Valley, development of an outdoor community classroom facility continued. Part funded by Friends of Tawd Valley through Lancashire Environment Fund this should be ready for use by a range of community groups this summer.



We have enhanced the accessibility of the Council's website in line with the 2018 Accessibility Regulations to help as many people as possible use our website.

We shared EU Settlement and COVID advice in different languages such as Polish and Portuguese to engage and support our non-English speaking communities.

Helping us to shape future service changes resident involvement is key and we sought your views on the Council Plan, Ormskirk Eastern Gateway, CIL allocations, CCTV sites, Statement for Community Involvement and a new benefits calculator, "Entitled to".

As a listening organisation, our new Customer Engagement Officer is here to improve how we make the best use of the customer voice in informing how services are delivered in the future. Responses to a recent consultation for improving how we deal with complaints are now being used to make the process better for residents - watch this space.

# SUPPORT BUSINESSES TO ADAPT AND PROSPER

## We want:

- West Lancashire to be the place of choice to locate your business
- Our 3 towns to be thriving hubs for their communities
- To support our businesses to succeed and grow
- A strong rural business economy
- A vibrant and modern Ormskirk market that attracts visitors to the town centre

## DID YOU KNOW

Over 25K invoices were processed during the year and we moved from paper processing to digital at the start of the first lockdown to avoid payment delays.

Businesses were very worried about their future so some of the work was extremely challenging. That also made it rewarding though as many said the grants would make a huge difference to them.

*Catherine Kirwan*  
seconded Business Grants Administrator

- ✓ 8,708 separate payments made to support our local business through COVID Business Grants
- ✓ 47 full Thursday/Saturday Ormskirk markets were held
- ✓ 1,008 food business registrations to monitor

Skelmersdale town centre retail development is now underway and will provide 55,000 sq. ft of new retail floorspace, car-parking, high quality public open space and a new play area. Outlets built in this first phase should be open for business from Easter 2022. £285K from the Lancashire Economic Recovery and Growth Fund, together with £50K from WLBC, is funding



a next steps regeneration plan for the town centre aimed at unlocking future investment to help the local economy recover following the pandemic.

Our planned Skelmersdale Ambassadors and Place Board support was suspended as staff were diverted to critical COVID business grants support. We ran social media campaigns, shared good news stories via the Let's Talk Skelmersdale website and social media channels and maintain contact with our Ambassadors throughout the pandemic. We look forward to meeting with Ambassadors both old and new and getting the network's momentum back on track in the coming year.

Unprecedented demand for our industrial estates means that we had 100% occupancy of the industrial and workshop units for the last 4 months of the financial year – fantastic news for the local economy.



We gave our own tenants the option of a 3-month rent holiday at an early point in the pandemic to support local businesses and to help limit our longer-term commercial vacancy rates.



To reassure shoppers about their safety signs were designed and displayed in retail areas (RHSS funded).

Temporary remodelling of Ormskirk's historic market giving it a socially distanced layout allowed it to safely operate when possible to offer a range of food and essential items. Artisan Markets over the summer and autumn and a special market in December attracted visitors that also benefitted other town centre businesses. £755K High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) funding for town centres was secured from Historic England and will be invested in Ormskirk. Some funding will target improvements at Wheatsheaf Walk, link the clock tower and Parish Church and improve alleyways, however most will go towards the Eastern

Gateway project, delivered with LCC. This match-funding will allow work to start on the scheme early in 2022 and have a real impact on how the town centre looks, encourage walking and cycling; and modernise the bus station.



Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group is leading on a refreshed action plan for the town centre to meet the current challenges and link with and build upon the HAZ programme.

Over £33 million in COVID-19 business grants has been awarded to businesses in West Lancashire to date from 13 different schemes running during the year and 1,941 individual businesses have been funded. On top of COVID support our business support team assisted or signposted 202 businesses for example through referrals to Boost Business Lancashire (which gives access to various funded business programmes) or by undertaking bespoke property searches.

To promote the return of customers, West Lancashire's tourism website DiscoverOrmskirk.com showcased those businesses that participated in Eat Out to Help Out, had online shops that delivered and hospitality venues with outdoor seating in line with the Government Roadmap. A new accommodation section is being built to help highlight the potential for staycations in the area.

Shop Safe, Shop Local was a campaign born from the Government's Welcome Back fund. The aim was to encourage residents to minimise travel and support their local businesses when they re-opened during the pandemic. On social media the Council shared 20 posts as part of the Shop Local campaign, with a combined reach of 40,032 and combined engagement of 3,262.

In a difficult year Ormskirk Market won a Trip Advisor Travellers Choice Award.



# BECOME A GREENER WEST LANCASHIRE

## We want:

- To become a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030
- Local business and citizens to embrace the green agenda
- Council housing stock to meet high standards of efficiency - insulation, design, technology
- To minimise waste disposal and improve recycling services to meet national targets
- To embed green infrastructure into our thinking and planning for West Lancashire's future development and regeneration
- To safeguard the natural landscape and maintain our green environment

## DID YOU KNOW

Council owned solar panels (on both corporate and housing stock) collectively generated over 1.4m KWh of renewable electricity displacing around 346 tonnes of carbon.

The competition for primary school children to design recycling superheroes for our new fleet was a great start to collaborating with the schools who have already shown keenness to get involved in future recycling events and campaigns.

*Sam Mooney*  
Waste & Recycling Promotions Officer

- ✓ **21,000+ households accessed kerbside garden waste collection**
- ✓ **11% annual increase on household recyclables**
- ✓ **9.1K tonnes of garden waste collected**

A brand-new fleet of 62 vehicles was supplied by Riverside Truck Rental (Skelmersdale) for Waste Management, Clean & Green Service, Playground Maintenance, Pest Control, Caretakers and the Ranger Service. As well as reduced maintenance down-time the benefits include: quieter electric bin-lifts on waste collection vehicles; our first electric van; and an estimated 80% reduction in NOx emissions and 66% reduction in particulate emissions (greenhouse gases).



Over 90% of subscriptions for our kerbside collection of garden waste were made online up from 64% the previous year. Subscribing online reduces costs compared with taking subscriptions by phone, removes the need to post documents and prevents all those trips to the tip!

West Lancashire currently has around 25km of designated cycle routes, the majority of which are off-road. We are planning for improved Green Infrastructure and Cycling and Walking links, working with partners such as Lancashire County Council and the Canal & Rivers Trust.

COVID meant that no internal works could be undertaken on the housing stock, however energy efficiency programmes were begun for 6 blocks of flats (36 properties) receiving external wall insulation, 400 A-rated energy efficiency boiler replacements and 130 properties receiving new windows. 129 properties were also re-roofed including loft insulation.

We continued to roll-out LED lighting at corporate sites helping to reduce our energy use and in the communal stairwells of 65 blocks of flats which also received installation of self-test emergency lighting.

Working in partnership with BP Pulse Ltd £133K grant funding was secured from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) for 32 new electric car charging points at three car parks across the borough. Points will be installed in Sandy Lane (Skelmersdale) and The Stiles and Hants Lane (both Ormskirk) later this year giving more convenience for drivers and further reason to choose to move to a greener transport.

We declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and launched a refreshed Climate Action Plan with 7 priority areas in November 2020 as a clear message of the Council's intent. From March 2020 - June 2021 the solar panel installation at the Investment Centre saved carbon

dioxide emission of over 162,500kg with more than 285,000kWh of electrical energy generated - enough to boil water for 14,257,985 cups of tea or to watch TV for 2,851,596 hours. Further actions are underway and will begin to see outcomes in the next 12 months.



Working alongside the other Lancashire Authorities and in partnership with Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHIL), we are promoting the share of £12m funding available for the installation of energy efficiency measures on eligible homes in West Lancashire through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme.



Our new Waste & Recycling Promotions Officer has been raising awareness of changes to improve recycling habits in the borough such as with the new Reduce, Reuse Recycle website page, use of reusable masks and recycling Christmas trees and wrapping paper. Just under 21K tonnes of recyclable material was collected from the kerbside during the year (including garden waste).

Backing the first ever national Food Waste Action Week in March we created a video showcasing the great work being done with the Birchwood Centre in Skelmersdale. With around 1,000 views, the video explored how residents can reduce their own food waste - one of the biggest contributors to climate change.



The Ranger Service progressed with invaluable habitat restoration and maintenance projects around the borough to maintain our green environment.

- ✓ £60,000 investment was made at Hunters Hill Quarry to extend and restore its heathland, improve biodiversity, enhance site access and drainage and introduce 4 additional benches for visitors.
- ✓ Wildflower meadows at Beacon Park, Tawd Valley Park and Coronation Park have been restored and maintained to encourage a diverse mix of flowers and increase biodiversity.
- ✓ 100 trees were planted to scallop the edges of existing woodlands at Beacon Country Park.

# A CLEAN, SAFE ENVIRONMENT WITH AFFORDABLE HOMES TO BUY OR RENT FOR EVERYONE IN WEST LANCASHIRE

## We want:

- To provide a cleaner physical environment to enhance the Borough
- West Lancashire to be safe for all citizens
- A Local Plan that supports quality growth and infrastructure in the Borough
- To provide quality and genuinely affordable homes

## DID YOU KNOW

We collected 1,295 tonnes of fly-tips helping keep West Lancashire looking lovely!

- ✓ Our Building Control team undertook 2,477 site inspections dealing with 13 reports of dangerous buildings and 10 demolition notices
- ✓ Supporting businesses stay safe during the COVID pandemic, our H&S team provided 556 proactive visits to business premises, 212 requests for advice and assistance and 1371 targeted information and guidance via email/mailshot
- ✓ 100% of sites surveyed for litter and dog fouling were acceptable or excellent

West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership is committed to multi-agency problem solving and delivering balanced and comprehensive solutions to tackle crime and disorder.

*Cliff Owens*  
Community Safety Officer

Our waste collection teams did a fantastic job in difficult circumstances and under COVID secure conditions to make sure that all frontline operational services continued. Crews collected over 23K tonnes from non-recyclable kerbside bin collections.

Keeping your local area clean and tidy is important and after reviewing the condition of our litterbins we replaced 53 to better suit the local demands.

We listened to customer comments about booking our bulky waste service and a revised online form now gives a much quicker and easier experience to secure a collection date.

Our agreement with LCC public realm maintenance was renewed allowing us to align verge maintenance and weed control with our own local maintenance work making it easier to manage the aesthetics of the environment for the local area and retaining jobs within the council.

A West Lancs Community Safety Partnership (CSP) bid involving the Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner secured £197K of Home Office Safer Streets funding for four new Public Open Space CCTV cameras, improved street lighting, and motorcycle barriers for Birch Green. Rollout of the cameras began in May 2021.

The last three calendar years have seen the lowest totals recorded for levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) for mischief night since 2005. 2020 saw the lowest total of deliberate fires recorded in the borough since 2005. This follows the CSP's annual Bright Sparx campaign around Halloween and bonfire night to reduce ASB and provide community reassurance. This includes two nights of Go4IT, an event that provides supervised, fun activities for young people.

Street Games, a project providing a variety of sporting and diversionary activities for young people delivered by Wigan Athletic Community Trust in Digmoor and Tanhouse, will now be expanded into Birch Green from April 2021 thanks to the funding from the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime obtained by the CSP and the involvement and support of local community leaders.

Leading our positive action against male violence towards women, the Community Safety Team's work enabled our organisation to successfully gain White Ribbon Accreditation.



Over £600K in Community Infrastructure Levy funding (collected from new developments in the borough) was assigned to improve community infrastructure including:

- ✓ £385K: Parbold-Appley Bridge towpath, Eastern Parishes - towpath enhancements along the Leeds to Liverpool Canal
- ✓ £40K: Cheshire Lines Path, Western Parishes - cycle and footpath access and signage improvements
- ✓ £30K: Long Heyes Play Area, Ashurst - extension of the play area for the under-six
- ✓ £50K: Delph Clough, Elmers Green Clough, Westhead Clough Skelmersdale - environmental improvements using community-based volunteers and trainees
- ✓ £19K: Helmsdale play area, Skelmersdale - replacement play area
- ✓ £58K: West End Playing field, Ormskirk - access and environmental improvements
- ✓ £10K: Halsall Lane Park, Ormskirk - play area extension
- ✓ £31.5K: Dial-a-ride transport service - to help fund the service for one year.

Eskbank (Skelmersdale) became the first Tawd Valley Development Company site to break ground in September. Three more sites are now also under construction, with a further site due to start shortly to give 81 genuinely affordable homes through the first phase. The first homes will be ready for families to move into in autumn 2021. The 2020-25 business plan has also been refreshed and planning permission recently submitted for 50 homes at Fairlie, Skelmersdale. The plan is ambitious and the Company are expecting to develop a total of 363 homes, across a range of tenures, over the life of the plan.

Having achieved Homes England Investment Partner status two affordable housing grant bids were approved by Homes England totalling £1,050,000. This grant is supporting the Council's development of 30 affordable homes through work currently underway by Tawd Valley Developments. Further great news for much needed affordable housing in the borough is the anticipated completion by other providers of 129 affordable homes made up of 55 in Ormskirk, 42 in Skelmersdale, 12 in Burscough, 16 in Hesketh Bank and 4 in Scarisbrick.



# EVERYONE TO BE HEALTHY, HAPPY, SAFE AND RESILIENT

## We want:

- To design services that help people stay healthy and independent
- An engaged and motivated Council workforce
- To invest in sports and leisure services and facilities
- To protect, invest and continue to develop our green leisure spaces
- To help businesses in West Lancashire to thrive, grow and connect

## DID YOU KNOW

We look after: 15 countryside and urban parks, 52 playgrounds, 38 playing pitches, 3 bowling greens, 8 allotment sites (132 Plots).

The MPT Team has been a great help to me in rebuilding my self-esteem and giving me the confidence to approach the job market with a renewed enthusiasm.  
*More Positive Together service user*

- ✓ 15,914 food parcels issued by food banks through West Lancs Together
- ✓ 79% staff think WLBC is a good organisation to work for
- ✓ 274 business contacted for 1-1 business recovery advice with 45 taking up the offer

Through the Winter Ready programme we proactively engaged with those at greatest risk of winter flu, COVID or severe ill health. 92 residents have been making small changes to their lifestyle through physical activity and healthy eating. A partnership approach with the West Lancashire Partnership created connected, preventative initiatives offering appropriate opportunities, support and positive experiences. Each week 15 online wellbeing sessions are delivered and an outdoor timetable was put into action in April.



Putting ourselves forward as a Gateway Organisation we co-ordinated 179 Kickstart placements for 16-24 year olds across 53 individual employers around West Lancashire and Central Lancashire, including 23 within the Council. These funded placements will be filled before December 2021 (the current end for the scheme), whilst the opportunity to expand the number of placements and employers will continue as part of our delivery. This is a fantastic new opportunity for young people to gain skills and work experience to improve their future job prospects.

This year we have engaged with 287 new participants to help access vocational training through the More Positive Together scheme and Kickstart placements. Providing a focus on an individual's health and wellbeing needs we are able to provide a wider basis for support into accessing employment or moving closer to the labour market.

When our staff are engaged and supported, our customers are too! Helping to build a great working environment we held a virtual Our People staff awards ceremony, introduced 'lunch and learn' sessions, trained 15 staff as Mental Health First Aiders to recognise common mental health issues and expanded our range of apprenticeships including 5 existing staff taking up coaching apprenticeships. 58 apprenticeships were in flight during 20/21.

Our Homeless and Private Sector Housing team supported people to stay in homes suited to their needs and of good standard by overseeing distribution of:

- ✓ £1.167m in Disabled Facilities Grants, helping to adapt 133 homes
  - ✓ £9k in Home Repair Assistance grants
  - ✓ £3k in Winter Warm grants
- We also provided temporary accommodation to 82 households.

Active Weight Management sessions were delivered online with 16 residents completing an 8-week course. Additional face to face sessions will be delivered once COVID restrictions are lifted.

Sheltered accommodation residents took part in socially distanced, outdoor physical activity sessions in the period leading up to Christmas week. Four sessions per week were delivered across two sites and 14 residents took up the offer ahead of lockdown.

An Active Schools pilot is currently under development through a local steering group including health colleagues. The pilot will engage with schools and will support schools, staff, parents and children to embed physical activity and wellbeing into practice and policy.

A Food Hub was set up at the end of March 2020 as part of our COVID response to get food parcels delivered to vulnerable residents referred through the West Lancs Together helpline. The hub covered the end to end process from ordering, picking, stock-taking, parcel packing, loading and delivery. Closing in December, at its peak it had around 15 volunteers from the Council working on a rota basis.

We carried out a study into the nature and extent of food insecurity in the borough. The study mapped and assessed the current support for tackling food insecurity. Potential opportunities were identified to support the development of a proactive, co-ordinated and rapid response from services to ensure anyone experiencing food insecurity in West Lancashire will be effectively supported to address the root causes.

Our sports and leisure facilities have continued to perform well despite lockdown restrictions and had 492,989 visitors over the year. The Council was successful in a bid to the National Leisure Recovery Fund which attracted £235,000 of funding supporting the operation of the facilities in 2020 and into 2021 to enable recovery from the COVID pandemic. We also continue to progress feasibility work for the future replacement of our Leisure Centres in Ormskirk and Skelmersdale.

Although many events in our beautiful parks were cancelled this year, we were able to put on mini beast hunts, Beacon bingo, Snowman orienteering trail, family walks and new themed trail activities designed to help meet national curriculum needs during home schooling.



We received positive feedback from the wellbeing walks designed to improve mental health and wellbeing whilst enjoying the borough's green spaces during a difficult year for many.

We repaired and upgraded a 100m section of footpath at Platts Lane Lake in Burscough. The surfacing had deteriorated to leave a slippery uneven slope making access difficult. The path has now been levelled and a hard standing surfacing put in place to allow access for wheelchairs and prams.

Using the government's Reopening High Streets Safely fund we created a temporary Business Recovery Information Officer post until March 2022. The post provides local high street retail and leisure businesses 1-1 business recovery assistance such as advice on grants, business rates and planning enquiries, social media, promotion and signposting for further help such as courses, webinars and safety standards.

Our Money advice service is available to help deal with a wide range of issues such as housing, debt, fuel poverty and affordable loans. Developed with partners and stakeholders through the updated Financial Inclusion Strategy the scope of the service includes support for the wider impacts of financial exclusion on an individual such as health and wellbeing, independence and job opportunities. We supported 2,131 tenants to make or maintain Universal credit claims online, made 28 referrals into the More Positive Together scheme and 11 onto Active West Lancs courses.



# BE A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL BY 2023

## We want:

- To be confident, capable and financially sustainable
- To continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision
- To be able to invest in high priority service areas
- To maximise available government funding and generate income to reinvest in West Lancashire
- To provide value for money services

## DID YOU KNOW

The outcome of the government's spending review for local government is still pending and this provides further uncertainty when planning a financial strategy over the medium term.

Although reserves have been used prudently over the last ten years financial modelling shows that finances are now at a crucial point. Action is underway to make savings and efficiencies during 2021/22 in order to set a balanced budget but it will be a challenging 12 months.

*James Pierce, Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Property*

- ✓ **428 tenants were helped to secure home contents insurance administered through the Council**
- ✓ **Over 39,000 customer portal accounts help control our customer contact costs**
- ✓ **We reduced our sickness absence by 3.28 days per FTE (excluding COVID)**

We are tackling a budget gap of around £1.2M through a number of initiatives. Key amongst these is the 'support and challenge' project cutting across all services areas and examining base budgets to ensure that budgets are aligned with Council priorities.

We have in place a Commercial Strategy which will drive new income generation whilst meeting the priorities of the Council, for example developing a solar farm to generate green energy and investigating expansion of the commercial property portfolio.



Tawd Valley Developments began construction in the autumn. Financial surplus from the company will be fed back into the Council. Although at an early stage of the business model any dividends received during 2021/22 will be used to support revenue expenditure.



The Council's Our Future programme continues to implement changes from the Sustainable Organisational Review which gave the Council a structure fit for purpose whilst delivering significant savings. We are now working on reviews in Business Support Services and Planning to shape changes to existing practices and processes enabling a sustainable, high quality service offer.

Within a self-sufficient funding model customer charges must be kept fair and not for profit whilst supporting the provision of services. Our fees and charges have been reviewed and we will benchmark with other Councils to update our policy and make a fees and charges review part of our budget setting.

The Revenues and Benefits Service was brought back into the Council giving us direct operational management of our key income streams. The service will deliver an important part of our vision and priorities for local communities and businesses. Our ICT services are now provided by LCC Digital through a new arrangement with Lancashire County Council.

Our response to the COVID pandemic was resourced through staff and services across the Council. Diverting resources impacted on capacity and service delivery in some areas. Overall, the Council has received financial assistance from the Government in response to the pandemic of approximately £2.6m to date giving an indication of the scale of the resource needed.

What else did we put in place to help with financial sustainability?

- ✓ Set a balanced budget for 2021/22
- ✓ External Audit of our accounts gave a favourable audit opinion
- ✓ Internal Audit Charter and work programme in place for the year
- ✓ Insurance cover reviewed and renewed to give value for money
- ✓ Reviewed our investment strategy in the light of changes introduced to the government borrowing requirements
- ✓ Reviewed our Risk Management Framework to allow a more active management of our risks
- ✓ Ensured our contracts register is up to date for active management
- ✓ Began a Treasury Management Review

# FINANCE AT A GLANCE

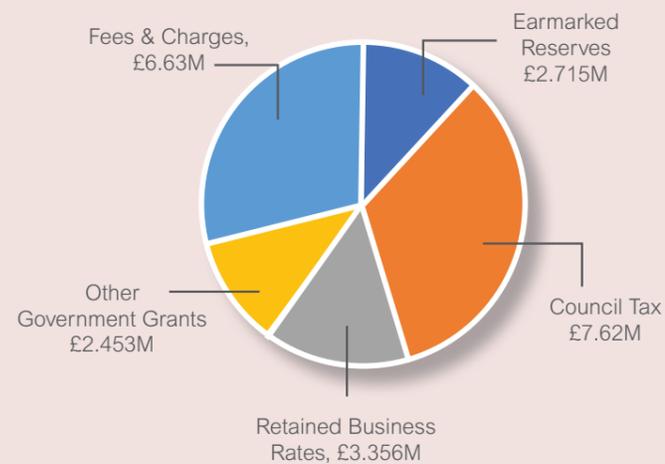
## Our Funding

Our revenue budget represents what we spend each year to run the Council and provide day-to-day services.

This Council is required to set a balanced budget each year as a legal requirement.

This budget does not include capital spending.

**Corporate Funding 2020/21**



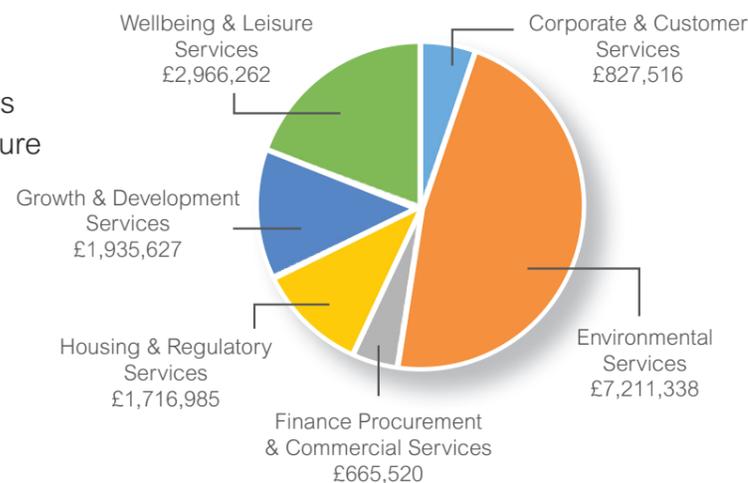
## Our Spending

We spend most of our budget (47%) on Environmental Services, which includes waste disposal, recycling and garden waste.

Another significant area of our spend is on the provision of Wellbeing and Leisure Services (19%).

This includes our Leisure Centres and Country Park and Ranger Services.

**Net Expenditure By Directorate 2020/21**



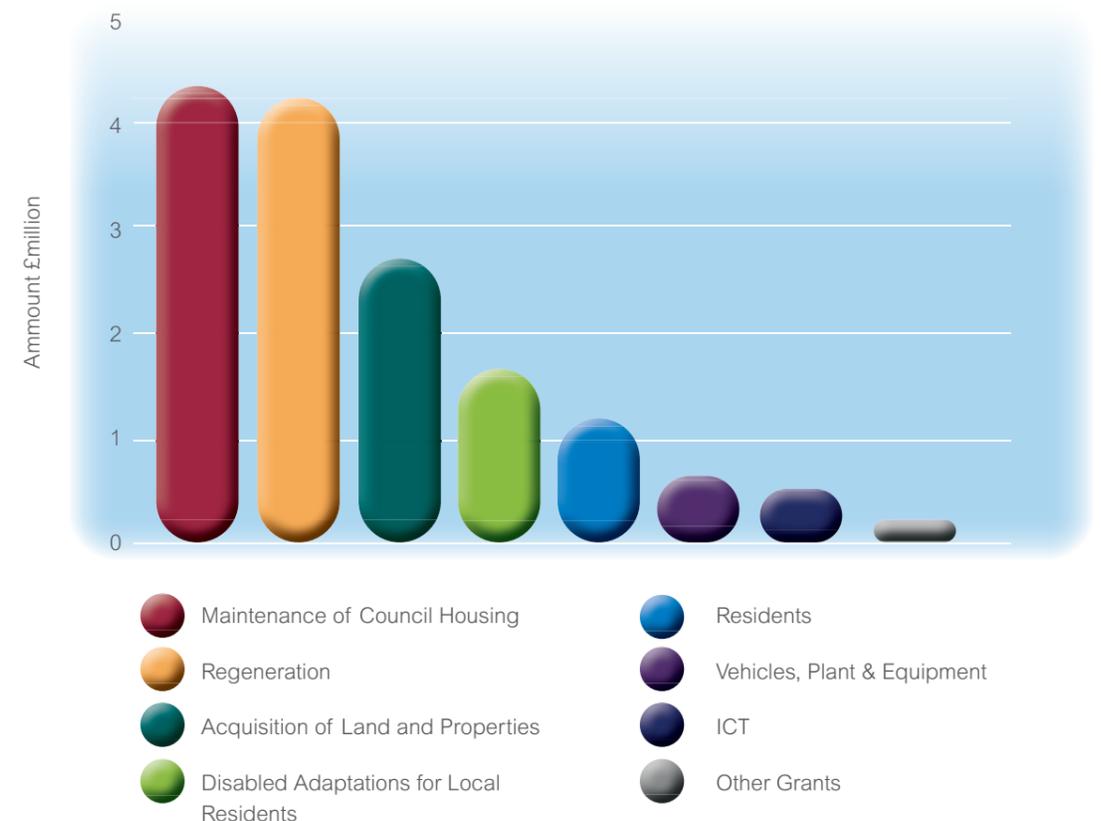
## Capital Spending

Alongside our day-to-day costs, we spend money on Capital Assets such as buildings, vehicles, equipment and ICT. Capital money can only be spent once, and some of it is 'ring fenced' e.g. if we have received a grant for a certain project.

During 2020/21 we spent £14.8M on capital schemes.

Regeneration schemes and maintenance of Council Housing were our top areas of spend and included Skelmersdale Town Centre.

**Major Areas of Capital Spend in 2020/21 (£m)**



# PERFORMANCE OUTTURN

**Icon key**

	On target (within 0.01%) or exceeded		Performance improved on previous year
	Off target (within 5%)		Performance declined on previous year
	Off target (by 5% or more)		No change on previous year
	Data only (no target)		Comparison not possible
<b>P</b>	Data pending		Not collected and/or reported at this time or previous calculations not comparable

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2020/21 Target	2020/2021 vs 2019/20	2020/21 Status	Note
	Value	Value	Value				
ICT1 Severe Business Disruption (Priority 1)	100%	100%	100%	99%	.....		From April 2021 the service will be delivered by LCC Digital. Outturn is year to date as at February. Final month data is not available.
ICT2 Minor Business Disruption (P3)	99%	99%	99%	97%	.....		As above
ICT3 Major Business Disruption (P2)	100%	100%	100%	98%	.....		As above
ICT4 Minor Disruption	99%	100%	100%	98%	.....		As above
ICT5 Advice & Guidance	100%	100%	100%	98%	.....		As above
B1 Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support new claims and change events (days)	6.16	7.73	12.00	12.00			
B2 Overpayment Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (payments received)	£370,939	£377,501	£203,504	£195,000			
B4 Benefits Local authority Error Overpayments - Lower threshold YTD	£49,034	£59,555	£17,934	£79,995			
R1 % of Council Tax collected	96.46%	96.29%	93.06%	N/A			Service delivered via contract. Due to COVID contractual targets on revenue collection suspended.
R2 % council tax previous years arrears collected	25.88%	23.68%	22.51%	N/A			As above
R3 % of Business Rates Collected (NNDR)	98.22%	98.02%	87.46%	N/A			As above
R4 Sundry Debtors % of revenue collected against debt raised	96.95%	94.36%	92.44%	N/A			As above
BV8 % invoices paid on time	98.21%	98.34%	95.95%	98.75%			Relates to just over 25K invoices processed during the year.
ES01 No. grass cuts undertaken on the highway between April-October	~	7	8	8			
ES02 No. grass cuts undertaken in Sheltered Accommodation between April-October	~	9	9.6	10			Fractional outturn due to wet weather conditions preventing final cut on all sites.
ES04 % locations inspected falling into categories A/B - Litter	~	99.15%	100%	90.00%			
ES06 % locations inspected falling into categories A/B - Dog Fouling	~	100%	100%	90.00%	.....		
ES07 % locations inspected falling into categories C/D - Overflowing Litter Bins	~	10.53%	00.94%	10.00%			
ES08 % locations inspected falling into categories A/B - grounds maintenance (includes grass and shrubbery)	~	92.53%	99.80%	85.00%			
ES11 % locations inspected falling into categories C/D - Detritus	~	04.16%	02.35%	10.00%			
ES14 Average of missed bins per fortnight (recycling / green)	~	84	68	50			
ES15 Average of missed bins per fortnight (recycling / blue)	~	96	82	50			
ES16 Average of missed bins per fortnight (garden waste / brown)	~	65	64	50			

ES17 Average of missed bins per fortnight (refuse / grey)	~	99	88	50	▲	●	
ES18 Flytip incidents reported	~	1,283	1,537		▼		Reflects data recorded on Service Now. Does not include flytips identified and removed by Clean & Green staff.
HS14 % non-decent council homes	0.07%	0.03%	<b>P</b>	0.10%	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	
HS27 % of properties with a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record (homes and buildings)	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	▼	▲	
HS28 % of properties with a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report (homes and buildings)	98.8%	97.6%	98.1%	100.0%	▲	▲	
HS29 % non-domestic that require an asbestos management survey/ re-inspection	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	.....	●	
HS30 % of non-domestic properties with fire risk assessment in place	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	.....	●	
HS31 % of properties covered by water hygiene risk assessment (homes and buildings)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	.....	●	
HS32 % emergency repairs completed on time	~	~	<b>P</b>	100%	/	<b>P</b>	Service provided by Wates from April 2020
HW01 No. attending health, wellbeing and sport activities & courses	~	11,134	243		▼		Activities restricted due to COVID. The majority of activity has been through online activities
NI 154 Net additional homes provided	351	622	458		▼		Draft figure subject to (minor) potential change
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	23	210	129		▼		Indicative figure and may be subject to change following submission of Local Authority Housing Statistical Return.
NI 157a Processing of planning applications: Major applications	97.56%	93.10%	100.00%	75.00%	▲	●	Related to 32 applications determined in the year.
NI 157b Processing of planning applications: Minor applications	89.91%	87.50%	89.85%	80.00%	▲	●	Related to 197 applications determined in the year.
NI 157c Processing of planning applications: Other applications	94.25%	91.21%	94.97%	85.00%	▲	●	Related to 557 applications determined in the year.
NI 159 Supply of ready to develop housing sites	103.0%	227.0%	<b>P</b>		<b>P</b>		Monitored through the Local Plan. Data is not expected to be available until late summer due to preparation timing.
NI191 Kerbside residual household waste per household (Kg)	485.62	541.32	391.54	500	▲	●	
NI192 Percentage of kerbside household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	43.76%	41.39%	48.72%	50.00%	▲	▲	
TS1a Rent collected from current and former tenants as a % of rent owed (excluding arrears b/f).	~	101.74	100.26	100.04	▼	●	
TS11% of rent loss through dwellings being vacant	0.94%	0.87%	1.45%	0.99%	▼	●	
WL24 % Building regulations applications determined within 5 weeks	50.00%	50.57%	35%	50.00%	▼		Relates to a total of 159 decisions made on Full Plan submissions during the year
WL85a Website: no. visits	657,969	648,500	546,671		▼		
WL85b Website: no. online forms submitted	15,541	26,580	46,778		▲		
WL85c Website: No. of payments processed online	69,607	64,990	78,042		▲		
WL90 % of Contact Centre calls answered	72.2%	85.9%	96.5%	88.0%	▲	●	Relates to just over 82.2K calls into the contact centre

WL108 Average answered waiting time for callers to the contact centre (seconds)	250	121	43	145	▲	●	
WL122 % Vehicle Operator Licence Inspections Carried Out within 6 Weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	.....	●	
WL123 % apprenticeships Started Each Year Within WLBC (% headcount of workforce)	3.70	0.74	6.67	2.30%	▲	●	Government target of an average of 2.3% over 4 years from 2017/18 - 2020/21 was exceeded with outturn of 2.69%.
WL124 Observations/incidents CCTV operatives involved in	5,509	4,400	3,584	↗	▼	↗	
WL125 Arrests that CCTV operators were involved in	266	200	190	↗	▼	↗	
WL126 No. incidents identified by CCTV operators in general monitoring	1,654	1,550	1,176	↗	▼	↗	
WL130 No. Service Now Customer Accounts	~	24,734	39,333	↗	▲	↗	
WL131 No. Social Media Followers (WLBC FB, Twitter)	~	9,567	13,715	13,224	▲	●	
WL132 FTE working days lost due to sickness absence per average FTE (excluding COVID absence)	~	10.46	7.18	8.08	▲	●	Data excludes COVID-related absences due to initial uncertainty about COVID sickness reporting and absence management and also to allow comparison with previous years.
WL132-c19 FTE working days lost due to sickness absence per average FTE (COVID inclusive)	~	~	8.64	↗	/	↗	Advice is pending from NW Employers as to whether COVID data is included for corporate sickness comparisons or not. We will report based on that advice in the future. For transparency, the COVID-inclusive figure is provided here.
WL140 % of staff who understand how their role contributes to the vision and priorities	~	~	80%	↗	/	↗	New for 2021.
WL141 % staff who feel the Council is a good organisation to work for	78%	~	79%	↗	▲	↗	Comparison to 2018/19
WL142 % staff proud to work for the Council	68%	~	73%	↗	▲	↗	Comparison to 2018/19
WL143 % of external calls to back office answered	~	84%	79%	↗	▼	↗	Relates to over 158,000 calls into back office

### General notes on the 2020/21 suite

Reporting of PIs is dependent on collection mechanisms remaining in place. Satisfaction (CIT\_) indicators are collected via the Citizen & Stakeholder Survey and some items require staff survey.

Our satisfaction survey results help us better understand how our services are perceived in the community. No Citizen Survey was carried out during 2020/21.

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. Not all data is available at year end. Data that is pending will be published when available on the council website.

### Icon key

●	On target (within 0.01%) or exceeded	▲	Performance improved on previous year
▲	Off target (within 5%)	▼	Performance declined on previous year
●	Off target (by 5% or more)	.....	No change on previous year
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# WEST LANCASHIRE IN NUMBERS

## HEALTH

Life expectancy at birth in years  
**(Male) 79.4 (Female) 82.6**

Adults (aged 18+) defined as obese or overweight  
**64.9%**

Physically active adults  
**67.9%**

## GOVERNANCE

**25**  
WARDS

**54**  
BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

**8**  
COUNTY COUNCILLORS

**19**  
PARISH COUNCILS

**1**  
TOWN COUNCIL

**1**  
PARISH MEETING

**347**  
SQUARE  
KILOMETRES

## HOUSING

**5,860**  
COUNCIL HOUSES

**50,642**  
DOMESTIC PROPERTIES

## POPULATION

**114,300**  
Resident population

**60.5%**  
Working Age (16 - 64)

**22.1%**  
Aged 65+

<h3>DEPRIVATION</h3> <p><b>178TH</b> most deprived area out of 317 districts and unitary authorities</p>	<h3>EMPLOYMENT</h3> <p><b>73.1%</b> Working age population in employment</p>	<h3>WELFARE</h3> <p><b>5.3%</b> Working age population claiming Out-of-Work Benefits</p>
<h3>EDUCATION</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working age population qualified to Level 4+ <b>32.3%</b></li> <li>Working age population with no qualifications <b>7.4%</b></li> <li>Achieving a good level of development when starting school <b>71.0%</b></li> </ul>	<h3>BUSINESS</h3> <p><b>4,580</b> Active</p>	

We can provide this information on audiotape, CD, large print,  
Braille and in other languages upon request.  
Please email: [BIIDICTService@westlancs.gov.uk](mailto:BIIDICTService@westlancs.gov.uk)  
or telephone 01695 5853211 to request this



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