

# COUNCIL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17



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## Leader's Introduction

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As a Council, our ambitions for the economy, environment and health and wellbeing are delivering positive outcomes across the whole of the Borough.

Our **economy** priority has had significant success. The Council made its largest ever investment in retail property, with a £3 million acquisition of Wheatsheaf Walk in the heart of Ormskirk town centre that will provide a long-term financial return for the Council. This investment is already bringing income to the Council, whilst supporting a wider offer to shoppers and visitors. We were proud to open the new £1.7 million Greenwood Business Centre in Skelmersdale with 11 high quality industrial units. This scheme has been in development for several years and it is satisfying to see its successful conclusion. We are delighted that we can now move forward with our longstanding regeneration plans for Skelmersdale town centre with our partners St Modwen and the Homes and Communities Agency following the positive outcome of a legal challenge to the scheme. Another once in a generation project making substantial progress is the proposed Skelmersdale Rail Link. The Council will work with Lancashire County Council and Merseytravel now that the preferred site has been identified to progress this project. Although there is a long way to go before we can welcome the first rail passengers to Skelmersdale, this is a truly exciting development with benefits for the whole of West Lancashire.

Within our priority of **health and wellbeing** we have committed £75,000 over the next three years to invest in ongoing maintenance of

our CCTV system to help keep crime low and reduce the fear of crime. We have also consulted on a revised Homelessness Strategy that takes account of the current and anticipated future challenges around homelessness, particularly in response to the fundamental changes in welfare benefits. The aim is to prevent people living in the borough from becoming homeless through a focus on improving housing advice services and enhancing the housing offer available to applicants. To support our built and physical **environment** priority we have allocated £25,000 for the Tawd Valley Park (Skelmersdale) project that will bring significant environmental and recreational benefits. Existing facilities and habitats will be assessed and extensive public consultation will inform the future requirements. A £15,000 contribution from the Environment Agency will be used to support the process and help improve the water quality of the River Tawd. The project will then seek funding to make the proposals a reality. We hope that Tawd Valley will go on to join Beacon Park (Skelmersdale) and Coronation Park (Ormskirk) in achieving Green Flag status.

We continue to work with lead agencies to press for a sustainable solution to the Alt Crossens pumping station issue without additional burden on tax payers. We have also provided some funding to a voluntary group towards staging a legal challenge to the decision to allow planning permission to extend the Whitemoss Landfill Site, Skelmersdale.

I cannot fail to mention the financial pressures facing the Council. We are managing the budget by generating sustainable income streams, adopting a more commercial approach, reshaping service provision and

seeking efficiency improvements. Although these pressures are an unwelcome backdrop to our services, through good management we are not only making progress on existing projects but also realistically planning further substantial projects in line with our identified priorities.

It remains a privilege to lead this Council and deliver our ambitions for West Lancashire. Often this is as a result of joint effort with other organisations and these good working relationships with our partners keeps West Lancs moving forward. We are fully supportive of and engaged with the work of other partners, agencies, organisations and volunteers in our united efforts to make a difference for all – our businesses, our places and our people.

Councillor Ian Moran

**Leader of West Lancashire Borough Council**

## Chief Executive's Review

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I am pleased in this annual Council Plan report to outline the main achievements of the year, with a particular focus on delivering the Council's priorities for the Borough.

As well as the key projects detailed within the report, we also undertake a wide range of statutory functions and additional work aligned to our priorities. Some of these key pieces of work will be reflected in this year's Council Plan. For example, strong progress has been made over the year in delivering the Economic Development Strategy 2015-2025 theme of "Promoting the Place." In November 2016 the Skelmersdale Ambassadors Network was launched, and now has over 90 members. A Skelmersdale Story Book was produced and a Place Board involving high level private and public sector individuals formed, to actively promote Skelmersdale. We have also begun the detailed review process of the Local Plan to make sure that West Lancashire can offer not only a good supply of development sites, but that we also consider how developments can improve places for people and the environment; for example, by helping to lead healthy lives, encouraging social interaction, improving employment opportunities and reducing inequalities between different areas.

Housing supply to meet a variety of needs is a key consideration within the Local Plan, and through our affordable housing programme we have been able to provide 95 affordable homes in the last year across five developments around the Borough. Three forms of affordable housing tenure were provided, consisting of discount market sale, affordable rent, and shared ownership. We are continuing to develop further affordable housing in partnership with Housing Associations

and by negotiating affordable housing provision with market housing developers.

We have also established a Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy to establish a high quality, accessible network of open spaces, green corridors and inland waterways. This will provide opportunities for sustainable forms of travel and leisure, particularly walking and cycling that link the Borough's major settlements with one another and with visitor attractions.

To help attain the best outcomes for the Borough we place great value on establishing and maintaining good relationships with partners both within and beyond our boundaries. One of the newer working relationships has been as part of the shadow Lancashire Combined Authority which has been in operation since summer 2016. We have played a full role within this project and await further discussion and confirmation of timelines to take this forward.

Providing a broad range of services with a reducing workforce means we must look for additional ways to support staff in these challenging times. This includes putting in place effective ways to further enhance the skills, expertise and professionalism of staff. An e-learning system for employees and Councillors has been launched through a joint partnership arrangement with Chorley Council. As well as work-related skills, personal development and health and wellbeing courses are also provided. The Council also invested in a Leadership Programme to enhance the skills of managers whilst providing added benefits to service delivery. We have also developed our approach to

apprenticeships, and the Council will be aiming to provide around 12 new apprenticeship starts per year for young people, or adult learners, with an opportunity to work while they learn.

We have co-ordinated an unusually busy elections programme beginning with the Borough Council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2016, followed by the EU Referendum. We then closed the year with preparations for the County Council elections, and subsequently the Parliamentary General Election.

As a result of reductions in government grant funding and other factors, we are delivering on these priorities whilst applying rigorous financial management to all our services. Our effective approach has resulted in a reduction in our annual budget requirement by well over 30% over the last seven years, making savings of over £5 million per year. Savings measures of just over £1m a year were approved for 2017/18, and it is estimated that we need to make additional savings of around £2million per year from 2018/19 onwards. Given the ongoing savings required, we are exploring new opportunities for sustaining and reshaping services, and for improving efficiency. It is also important to make certain that we receive all the income due from existing funding streams. To assist with this we have carried out reviews of empty homes, single person discounts and business rates.

Finally, this year we welcomed two new Directors to the Council, Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey (Housing & Inclusion Services) and Heidi McDougall (Street Scene Services). I look forward to their teams and the Council benefitting from their ideas and leadership.

It has been an extremely busy year which has produced strong performance in many aspects of the Council's work, notwithstanding the financial pressures. We look forward to continuing to strive to improve performance where possible, and to work with our partners to deliver the ambitious agenda for the Borough.

**Kim Webber**  
**Chief Executive**

## Towards our Priorities

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Our three-year plan enables us to plan for our financial and staffing requirements and look for longer-term opportunities to help achieve our ambitions. The Council Plan is reviewed annually to maintain its currency.

### **Our Vision:**

To be a Council which is ambitious for West Lancashire.

### **Our Values:**

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

### **Our priorities:**

- Ambitious for our Economy
- Ambitious for our Environment
- Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing

Making sure the whole organisation recognises our priorities ensures we direct our efforts and resources in the most effective and efficient way. Our priority actions and activities during the year are outlined below.

## Priority: Ambitious for our Economy

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

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A number of projects were identified to help achieve this ambition. Highlights for 2016/17 are given below.

A legal challenge to the approved planning application for **Skelmersdale's town centre** was dismissed by the Court of Appeal confirming that the regeneration plans could be progressed. In partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the developer, St Modwen, the scheme includes a multi-screen cinema through Reel Cinemas, restaurants, bars and retail facilities. The plans will create in excess of 500 new jobs and bring a host of other enhancements, including a high street link between West Lancashire College and the Concourse, the construction of new and attractive public spaces, a new play area and improved lighting and pedestrian surfaces. The partnership is now working closely together to deliver this key project and is in discussion with potential occupiers of the retail and leisure units to establish the strength of their interest and to ensure

the scheme meets current market requirements. Work is also being undertaken to identify a site within the town centre for a possible replacement leisure centre.

The **Land Auction** scheme involves WLBC and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The scheme helps meet the needs of the Local Plan by bringing forward ready to build housing sites as well as providing much needed capital income that can be invested in the Skelmersdale area. The sale of the first of four sites at Whalleys (Skelmersdale) was successfully completed and the HCA are now seeking to dispose of the remaining sites for accelerated housing construction.

The Council in partnership with the HCA has also successfully marketed three vacant sites which form part of the Skelmersdale town centre renewal project. The disposal of these sites and the first site at Whalley will see the delivery of more than 400 residential properties in the town, with work ongoing on

the delivery of substantial development of other sites within the town.

*106.3% Supply of ready to develop housing sites*

The **Economic Development Strategy's** framework for economic regeneration benefits the whole borough. Several of its themes and key asks are reflected in our other strategic priorities. A significant outcome within the year has been the launch of the Skelmersdale Place Board. Setting direction and driving some of the outcomes identified within the strategy, the Board has representation from key public and private sector leaders including from Skelmersdale businesses, the Borough Council, Edge Hill University, West Lancashire College and the HCA. The Board is encouraging more businesses and stakeholders to join the new Skelmersdale Ambassador Network which has a proactive role in promoting the town's business and investment opportunities to

regional, national and international audiences.

We have maintained our help and support for businesses developing their apprenticeship programmes including through take up of the Let's Talk Business apprenticeship grant scheme for 16-24 year olds. Members of the Council's Employment & Skills Charter continue to support employment and skills initiatives across the year. For example, businesses helped with a successful careers day event organised by Up Holland High School, where over 100 year 10 students took part in various career-planning activities including gaining valuable mock interview experience with the local businesses.

- *63 signatories to the Employment & Skills Charter*
- *38 apprenticeships created after officer intervention*
- *174 local businesses accessing available support from Lancashire growth programmes*

The **Ormskirk Town Centre** management group is actively ensuring that Ormskirk is meeting the changing needs of our high

streets. A vibrant brand for Ormskirk has been created to provide a unifying feature for all businesses and organisations to use. Visitor perceptions of the town fed into this work and these views also helped prioritise the strategy actions.

Further options for promoting the town are being explored with the appointment of Groundwork to investigate developing a Business Improvement District (BID) for Ormskirk town centre. A review of car parking, an essential element in the sustainability of any town centre, is also being taken forward and the centre's appearance has been brightened through various activities including re-painting and varnishing benches and street furniture as well as the use of bunting and street banners.

Complementing the strategy work the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee produced A Market Town Strategy for Ormskirk with recommendations to be considered by the Town Centre Management Group and associated working groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Springboard

#### *Ormskirk Town Centre*

- *town centre ground floor units vacancy rate 6.8% (national rate 9.4%; North West 13.2%)*
- *since August 2016, average weekly footfall percentage change + 1.5%, (national average -0.55%; regional average -0.15%) <sup>[1]</sup>*

Ensuring that West Lancashire's **transport infrastructure** meets future demand remains central to our economic ambitions for the area. Although not directly within the Council's control, by working closely with the County Council and other partners wherever possible we are active in supporting and influencing the delivery of the improvements and developments identified in the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan.

Following an options appraisal by Network Rail, the former Glenburn Sports College and West Lancashire College site has been identified as the preferred site for the proposed Skelmersdale rail station. Further detailed feasibility studies are to be carried out, funded by LCC and Merseytravel, on the wider rail link.



LCC are close to finalising the West Lancashire Route Management Strategy and there will be a series of highways projects for LCC to implement in order to deliver the different aspects of the Strategy across West Lancashire.

A review of the Local Plan is underway which will include a review of the existing transport-related infrastructure policies. The value of 'greener' transport for West Lancashire has been recognised and is being taken forward through the development of the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy.

We continue to promote West Lancashire's profile and ambitions within the wider regional agenda through the shadow **Lancashire Combined Authority** (LCA) and maintain engagement with the **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority** as an Associate Member. The shadow LCA began operation in summer 2016 aiming to facilitate closer strategic working between the Lancashire authorities on issues relating to transport, economic development, housing and regeneration. Within the structure we have a leading role in the Prosperous Lancashire theme. We are also active with

our membership of the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and corporate membership of the Liverpool LEP.

From a business perspective, a significant element of the work to **promote our borough as a place to be** has come from the development of a strong new brand for Skelmersdale reflecting its ideal location and unique business opportunities. A Skelmersdale Story was developed that set out for the first time a shared visual identity and positive narrative for the town which firmly positions it as a place for business and investment.

*In a recent survey, two-thirds of stakeholder respondents are satisfied with West Lancashire as a place to operate their organisation or business*

Developing strong branding for Ormskirk town centre and our rural assets has been critical in order to raise their profiles as visitor destinations. Building and monitoring relationships with key Ormskirk businesses and stakeholders is an important element in supporting those who have an interest in the town to take ownership and help develop a successful

and vibrant town centre. Marketing our rural visitor attractions and events to strengthen the visitor economy has included continued use of the Visit Lancashire website.

*£135m was generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure (2014)<sup>2</sup>.*

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<sup>2</sup> Marketing Lancashire (STEAM)

## Priority: Ambitious for our Environment

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

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A number of key projects targeted this priority in 2016/17 and a summary of the progress is given below.

The recent **CCTV project** to expand the suite of CCTV cameras in West Lancashire concluded with the final four cameras being brought into operation (Castlehey, Tanfields and Little Digmaor (Skelmersdale) and the Burscough Street area of Ormskirk). The borough now benefits from a network of 106 public open space cameras. Working closely with the police, the use of the intelligence gathered continues to help provide a safe and secure public environment.

*In a recent survey 48% of respondents believe CCTV helps reduce the fear of crime in the community*

In the most recent annual figures, CCTV staff were involved with 5,110 incidents referred to the police, 525 missing/vulnerable person incidents, 337 arrests, and identified 1,525 incidents themselves. This was achieved

operating within agreed legal protocols and making effective use of the technology. This was confirmed when the Council was independently audited and awarded a five-year Surveillance Camera Code Compliance certificate. A £75K budget over the next three years to maintain the existing suite has been agreed.

As a partner in the multi-agency **Community Safety Partnership**, the Council supports projects and interventions that tackle crime and disorder to help keep our borough a safe place to live, work and visit.

*In a recent survey 79% of respondents feel safe and secure within West Lancashire*

Foremost amongst these activities are the annual Freshers' week programme and Bright Sparx campaign. Bright Sparx has had notable success around the Mischief Night/Bonfire Night period in reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB) such as the misuse of fireworks, criminal damage and the number of anti-social fires

started deliberately, whilst the three-week long Freshers' week programme delivers key safety, security and behaviour messages to the student community to help promote integration into the community whilst studying and socialising in the borough.

*Over 3,998 reported incidents of ASB in West Lancashire last year*

Actions making a positive difference also include the co-ordination of 12 Community Action and Engagement events, which aim to improve working relationships between agencies and the community, increase community confidence and reduce the fear of crime. These events provide an opportunity for residents to talk to staff from the Council, Police, Fire and Rescue and other agencies about any concerns they have about crime and community safety.

Our **estates revival projects** are not only revitalising council estates and improving homes but also supporting local jobs and training opportunities for the young people of the area. A major success story has been the completion of the four-year £8million project to revive the entire Firbeck estate (Skelmersdale). The final phases saw the completion of 42 new energy efficient properties and regeneration of the street scene. Earlier works provided new kitchens and bathrooms and a programme of external improvements including insulation and render, double-glazed windows, new doors and roofs and loft insulation. All private home owners took up a Council grant (repayable when properties are sold) to have some or all of the external improvements carried out to their homes meaning the project delivered benefits to the whole of the estate.

Following budget approval in 2017, the Beechtrees Revival scheme (Digmoor, Skelmersdale) was able to expand the scope of its new build element. Thirty-six new homes will now be built later in 2017. Improvements planned for the existing flats will include new kitchens, bathrooms and heating, as well as replacement

windows and doors. All work is due to commence in 2017.

*The Firbeck building programme and commitment to building in Beechtrees is only the third programme of new Council housing provided by the authority in the last 20 years.*

Improving the built and natural environment for tenants is an intrinsic part of revival schemes and an **environmental improvement** budget within the housing programme has also been used to enhance local areas. Funding has been directed at providing additional car parking for the Category 1 Sheltered Housing in Holly Close, Westhead. The remaining funds will be focused on communal bin stores.

Work on **Street Scene priority projects** has included continued development of the new communications system to increase the flexibility and responsiveness of the refuse collection service. The system optimises routes and provides real-time progress of the rounds. In-cab messaging enables a safe and efficient way for interaction between office staff and collection crews. Any problems, such as contaminated recycling, bins not presented

for collection or delays in the collection rounds can be immediately reported. Customer Services will then be able to provide accurate, up to date information to customer enquiries.

*In a recent resident survey:*

- *84% of respondents were satisfied with household collections for domestic waste*
- *78% of respondents were satisfied with household collections for recyclable materials*

Charging for optional garden waste collections was agreed to achieve savings for the Council. Preparation work was undertaken to enable residents to sign up to the new green compostable waste service from mid-April.

*16,697 properties signed up to new garden waste service (May 2017)*

## Priority: Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing

We will improve the health and wellbeing of local communities.

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We have made considerable progress in this priority, particularly in the key projects for 2016/17 outlined below.

The programme for **housing capital investment** funds a variety of schemes to improve around 6,000 existing Council homes and continue to reduce the number of our properties not meeting the decent home standard to 0.25%. The works are prioritised through resident views and stock need. £15.07m funding for 2016/17 was allocated to continue with programmed works including windows, doors, kitchen and bathroom replacements and electrical upgrades. New lifts were installed in three blocks of sheltered housing, 200 requests for disabled adaptations were implemented at a cost of £589K and all programmed cavity wall and loft insulations were completed. Tenants were also consulted on the allocation of future budget.

*We have fitted 227 bathrooms and 490 kitchens to council homes*

Due to their own financial pressures, all Supporting People funding from LCC for older persons housing related support in **sheltered accommodation** ceased at the end of March 2017. To try and minimise the impact from the loss of this £237K, we undertook a needs analysis of all sheltered residents and developed costed service options for a new sheltered management service.

Consultation meetings were held with residents at Category 2 sheltered schemes, letters were sent to all residents and personal visits were made to Category 1 scheme residents and any other resident who required this. The consultation was extremely positive, meetings were well attended and changes were discussed with residents throughout the consultation period. The new sheltered housing management service was launched from April 2017 and now includes staff contact tailored to individual need and a flexible service delivered from geographical hubs. Residents still have a

familiar staff presence which was an important factor in bringing in the new service changes.

*12 Council-run Cat 2 sheltered accommodation schemes in West Lancs*

The extensive scope of the **Leisure Strategy** saw some key milestones achieved during the year. A financial viability appraisal and options for financing new leisure facilities in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk has been commissioned and in preparation for this, the Council is now negotiating an extension to the agreement with its current leisure services provider.

- *52% of residents responding to a recent survey are satisfied with parks and open spaces*
- *1.09 million annual visitors to leisure centres & swimming pools*

Access to West Lancs' cultural offer was enhanced with striking structural changes being made to facilities at the Chapel Gallery. An Arts Council England grant has enabled the installation of a glass-fronted external lift, bespoke windows, a new entrance and an increase to exhibition and events space. Annual visitor numbers have increased to over 66,000.

Active West Lancs is a scheme running a wide range of activities to improve people's health and wellbeing across the borough. Funded by LCC, a local delivery partnership of the Council and West Lancashire Community Leisure Trust, West Lancs School Sports Partnership, West Lancs CVS, and Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative now provides activities such as health walks, school activities, family workshops, cookery activities, physical activity sessions, weight management courses and even community farming and gardening. Individuals can sign up, or GP or medical professionals can refer into the scheme making sure that it is available to those most in need.

The Tawd Valley Park project, which will increase the level of outdoor activity

available in the borough, began with £25K funding to undertake a masterplan for a programme of environmental and recreational improvements for the park.

A Health Strategy Manager was appointed in autumn to begin development of a **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**. The strategy will ensure that the Council can maximise outcomes around reducing health inequalities through targeting resources and by working in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector to achieve common goals. Whilst the strategy is in development, existing processes have been reviewed and groundwork done to look at embedding health and wellbeing as an element in the development and delivery of all Council services.

- *6,670 took part in health improvement activities*

Health promotion and improvement activities have included the delivery of nutrition and healthy lifestyle talks, health walks across the borough, and the return of the popular West Lancs walking festival.

The uptake and use of digital services by residents and tenants is being driven through the implementation of the Council's **Digital Inclusion Strategy** action plan.

*In a recent resident survey:*

- *87% of respondents use the internet*
- *68% of respondents use the internet every day*
- *34% of respondents over 65 do not use the internet at all*

A key action has been engaging with West Lancs Council for Voluntary Service to deliver a range of digital inclusion training and support initiatives to targeted WLBC tenants and residents. A pilot community project is supporting people to become more digitally aware and increase general access of online opportunities. This project started in March 2017 and is scheduled to run until the end of October 2017.

Promoting digital access of Council services means that we must continue to resource their development. Our Digital by Preference initiative is aligning all our work around enhancing and expanding the authority's digital services. During the year

we have launched a housing app providing tenants with easy access to a range of housing services, continued to improve the accessibility of our website and begun work on implementing a new customer information and workflow management system that will help re-design services across the Council making them more efficient and customer friendly.

- *40% of respondents to a recent resident survey had used the Council website to access information*
- *45,134 online payments made*
- *Over 4,000 followers on Twitter*

Through the **Tenants' Financial Inclusion Strategy** we continue to help our most vulnerable and financially excluded tenants to maximise income and benefits, including use of discretionary housing payments. A proactive approach ensures those affected by welfare reforms continue to be supported with budgeting and money advice services.

To tackle the causes of financial difficulties, staff have been trained in

recognising the needs of particular groups of tenants, for example younger tenants. Our new processes allow us to conduct financial assessments at pre-tenancy and at sign up and to then tailor the future support and visit requirements. We have improved access to information linked to issues that could directly impact on a tenants' ability to pay rent and maintain their tenancy such as free childcare places, energy efficiency and sensible lending. We continue to provide money advice sessions in various facilities across the borough. Providing this type of support has contributed to our rent collection of 99.09% in 2016/17 and contributed to the reduction in number of evictions compared to previous years.

- *587 tenants signed up to SMS/E mail services*
- *1,398 (23.7% of tenants) paying by direct debit*
- *1,457 appointments held by the Independent Rent & Money Advice team*

## Managing the Budget

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

On the Council's General Revenue Account (which covers all services apart from the Council's housing stock) a favourable budget variance of £391,000 was achieved in 2016/17, or 3.0% 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.

The latest medium term financial forecast projects an estimated budget gap of £2.725 million by 2020/21, which would represent around 13% 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 the Policy Options framework which has operated effectively to deliver additional income, efficiencies and other savings over recent years.

A favourable budget variance of £1,404,000, or 5.4%, was also delivered 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.

## Performance Data

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

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

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

From the performance information available, 78% of targets for available PIs in the suite were met or exceeded in 2016/17, with 56% of available outturns showing an improvement or matching the previous year. This reflects that overall the Council is continuing to maintain a good level of performance in many of our frontline and support services, despite significant pressures on resources.

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



## Borough Highlights

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West Lancashire benefits from a broad base of organisations and individuals who create diverse activities for the borough. The Council is involved with a variety of partners helping to stage a range of events throughout the year which contribute to making the Borough a vibrant and pleasant place to live. All our activities and events are promoted via our website, press releases and our Twitter account. This contributes to a recent survey result, which indicated that over 80% of people are satisfied with the local area as a place to live.

One of the main events of the calendar year is the **Ormskirk MotorFest**. Going from strength to strength, the sixth year of the festival attracted around 30,000 visitors compared with 10,000 in the first year. Around 300 classic and competition vehicles from all eras of motoring were displayed in Coronation Park and the streets of Ormskirk town centre. The free event is organised by Aintree Circuit Club, supported by the Council, and has become one of the north west's biggest free family events. Teaming the event with a

Vintage and Handmade Fair in the Chapel Gallery and bus station car park, as well as other entertainments, helped bring the whole town centre to life for a fantastic family day out.

The town centre has hosted an **Ormskirk Market** dating back to 1286. Along with hundreds of other markets across the country, we celebrated Love Your Local Market fortnight in May. This appreciation of our market culture was organised by the National Association of British Market Authorities. Aughton Street and Moor Street were decorated with bunting and banners and special events such as traditional fete games and visiting entertainers including music and dancing were on display to provide the festival feel.

In November, the **Sandy Lane Centre** (Skelmersdale) launched a new exhibition inspired by its local heritage. Supported by an Arts Council England grant, in

partnership with The Friends of Sandy Lane, community workshops were held to help development of permanent professional artwork to animate the Centre. The project was led by the arts organisation One Red Shoe, writer Sarah Schofield and supported with invaluable archive material provided by Skelmersdale Heritage Society. Artwork from the community workshops was then featured in an exhibition of images, stories and sculptures contributed by Park Children's Centre, Beacon View Residential Home, Divine Days, Greenhill Community Centre, St Richard's Primary School and West Lancashire High School. The new Tree House Gallery, gift shop and café also opened. This is a community venture run by the Friends of Sandy Lane and supported by the Council to improve resources for the local community. The gallery includes an exhibition space for individual artists and makers to sell their work.

Our commitment to excellent public open spaces was assisted with a new park at **Station Approach** being adopted by the Council in October. The site behind Ormskirk Railway Station previously marked the starting point of the Ormskirk to Skelmersdale branch line. The area is now a mix of woodland and grassland habitats providing homes for a wide range of wildlife as well as having a network of fully accessible hard-standing paths. The Council was able to fund this scheme through developer contributions from nearby housing sites. The works have been undertaken by Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside, in conjunction with the Council's Parks and Countryside Ranger Service.

We have continued with our popular autumn '**Free Tree**' scheme which aims to improve the Borough's environment and attract more wildlife into gardens. The scheme encourages West Lancs residents to plant trees in their gardens. Since the first scheme in October 2008, over 5,800 trees have been given to residents to plant throughout the Borough. This year either

Bramley Apple or Victoria Plum trees were available, ideal for the smaller domestic garden. Trees were allocated in time for planting during National Tree Week 2016.

The Council's Countryside Ranger Service and volunteers have been working closely with Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Plan Bee Project to improve habitats for wild bees and other pollinators at Beacon Country Park. The Plan Bee project is largely funded in West Lancashire by the Whitemoss Community Fund. As a result they won a **Bees' Needs Award** from Keep Britain Tidy. The Rangers and volunteers have also carried out complementary work throughout areas of Council-managed land in West Lancashire by planting wildflower seed, changing mowing regimes and altering woodland management.

We encourage the whole community to get behind keeping West Lancs attractive and litter free, and joined Keep Britain Tidy's **Great British Spring Clean** campaign in March. Borough Council events were held at Coronation Park (Ormskirk), Chequer Lane Lake (Up Holland), Tawd

Valley Park (Skelmersdale) and Station Approach (Ormskirk) with the valuable support of members of the community, including local schools. We were also able to support parish councils and residents across the borough to arrange events in their areas and inspire people to participate in community clean ups.

An older people's **Silver Sunday** event was held in the Concourse (Skelmersdale) in October. The event showcased the services available in West Lancashire to help and support older people to live happier and healthier lives. Grants were available from Lancashire County Council's Older People's Champion's Fund to organisations and individuals who wanted to arrange activities for older people on the day. The event tied in with the national annual Silver Sunday which celebrates the value and knowledge that older people bring to our communities and helps tackle the loneliness and isolation felt by many older people by arranging social activities so they can get out, try new things and meet new people.

## Strategy Review

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The strategic Council Plan was refreshed in April 2017. A summary of the plan and projects for 2017/18 is given below.

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

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

### Priorities & Key Projects:

#### **Ambitious for our Economy**

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

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

#### **Ambitious for our Environment**

Enhance the built and physical environment, and its cleanliness

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








#### **Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing**

















Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities

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

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

## APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2013/14–2016/17

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)		

Performance Indicator	Results 2013/14-2016/17				Targets 2016-17	2016/17 vs 2015/16	2016/17 Result	Target 2017/18	Comment
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Annual 2016/17				
ICT1 Severe Business Disruption (Priority 1)	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%			99%	
ICT3 Major Business Disruption (P2)	100%	100%	92%	96%	98%			98%	The small number of incidents in this category meant that a single incident not meeting target in year resulted in the annual outturn not meeting target.
ICT2 Minor Business Disruption (P3)	100%	99%	98%	98%	97%			97%	
ICT4 Minor Disruption (P4)	99%	99%	98%	99%	98%			98%	
ICT5 Advice & Guidance (P5)	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%			98%	
B1 Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	7.44	6.62	7.02	6.41	12.00			12.00	
B2 Overpayment Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (payments received)	£170,909	£203,868	£276,577	£311,409	£170,000			£195,000	
B4 Benefits Local authority Error Overpayments - Lower threshold	£86,437	£86,090	£82,401	£96,867	£133,765			Below lower threshold	2017/18 Target will be based on lower threshold 2017/18 estimates. Actual cash figure will not be received until later in

Notes: ~ not collected/reported at this time; <sup>P</sup> data pending; <sup>R</sup> data restated; N/A – not applicable; # only a difference of 3% or more is statistically significant

Performance Indicator	Results 2013/14-2016/17				Targets 2016-17	2016/17 vs 2015/16	2016/17 Result	Target 2017/18	Comment
	2013/14 Value	2014/15 Value	2015/16 Value	2016/17 Value	Annual 2016/17				
									the year.
R1 % of Council Tax collected	95.32%	96.03%	97.02%	96.74%	97.10%	↓	⚠	97.10%	Closure of the local magistrates court delayed summonses being issued and with resulting impact on the ability to pursue non-payment cases and therefore collection rates.
R2 % council tax previous years arrears collected	20.94%	33.56%	37.31%	26.82%	24.50%	↓	✅	24.50%	
R3 % of Non-domestic Rates Collected	95.53%	96.40%	98.32%	97.72%	97.20%	↓	✅	97.20%	
R4 % Sundry Debtors % of revenue collected against debt raised	90.05%	90.73%	95.00%	95.06%	89.10%	↑	✅	89.10%	
BV8 % invoices paid on time	97.05%	98.22%	98.81%	98.48%	98.75%	↓	⚠	98.75%	Relates to 39,851 invoices in year.
CIT01 % feel West Lancs is safe & secure to live	79%	78%	79%	79%		—			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT02 % satisfied with cleanliness of streets	64%	69%	65%	56%		↓			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT03 % satisfied with how WLBC runs things	68%	68%	62%	57%		↓			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT05 % satisfied with local area as a place to live	81%	82%	78%	80%		↑			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT06 % satisfied with sports/leisure facilities	40%	42%	41%	27%		↓			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT07 % satisfied with parks and open spaces	59%	58%	60%	52%		↓			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT08 % residents agreeing that WLBC provides value for money	43%	43%	41%	35%		↓			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT12 % people satisfied with household collections for domestic waste	87%	83%	86%	84%		↓			# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.





















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Performance Indicator	Results 2013/14-2016/17				Targets 2016-17	2016/17 vs 2015/16	2016/17 Result	Target 2017/18	Comment
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Annual 2016/17				
	Value	Value	Value	Value					
CIT13 % people satisfied with household collections for recyclable materials	81%	82%	82%	78%					# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
CIT14 % of residents who feel the Council keeps them well informed about its services and benefits	57%	57%	50%	49%					# Results from Citizen Survey 2017.
HS13 % LA properties with Landlord Gas Safety Record outstanding	0.10%	0.10%	0.13%	0.19%	0.00%			0.00%	Target based on legal requirement for all properties to have certificate. Processes being reviewed.
HS14 % non-decent council homes	0.58%	0.39%	0.30%	0.25%	0.30%			0.25%	
HS1 % Housing repairs completed in timescale	96.73%	96.56%	96.39%	97.22%	97.00%			97.00%	
NI 152 Working age people on out of work benefits	13.6%	12.6%	11.2%	10.5%					Data released via ONS (NOMIS). Due to lag in information figure relates to November 2016. NOMIS figures do not include claimants of universal credit. Replaced for 17/18 with <i>ER05 West Lancs Claimant Count</i> which includes Universal Credit claimants.
NI 154 Net additional homes provided	308	239 <sup>R</sup>	266 <sup>R</sup>	305					13/14 originally published as 370; 14/15 as 369; 15/16 as 300. All Restated as shown in Jan 2016 following a planning appeal.
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	54	16	92	95					
NI 157a Processing of planning applications: Major applications	~	76.09%	95.12%	87.10%	65.00%			65.00%	From 2014/15, data where a time extension is agreed with applicant is not counted so previous years cannot be used for comparison.
NI 157b Processing of planning applications: Minor applications	81.67%	73.88%	67.31%	88.85%	75.00%			75.00%	Outturn is above government target of 65%
NI 157c Processing of planning applications: Other applications	90.83%	81.99%	82.71%	90.56%	85.00%			85.00%	Outturn is above government target of 80%

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Performance Indicator	Results 2013/14-2016/17				Targets 2016-17	2016/17 vs 2015/16	2016/17 Result	Target 2017/18	Comment
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Annual 2016/17				
	Value	Value	Value	Value					
NI 159 Supply of ready to develop housing sites	112.0%	120.5%	108.3%	106.3%					
NI 191 Residual household waste per household (Kg)	527.19	502.59	513.15	P	500.00	P	P	500.00	Pending confirmation of merchant data.
NI 192 Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	43.07%	46.29%	46.80%	P	50.00%	P	P	50.00%	Pending confirmation of merchant data
NI 195a Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Litter	0.87%	0.83%	1.44%	1.03%	1.61%			1.61%	
NI 195b Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Detritus	4.04%	4.77%	4.95%	2.21%	5.00%			5.00%	
TS1 Rent Collected as a % of rent owed (excluding arrears b/f)	~	98.65	99.81	99.09	97.00			99.00	Revised definition adopted for 2014/15. Previous years comparisons not possible. Target increased for 2017/18.
TS24a Average time taken to re-let local authority housing (days) - GENERAL NEEDS	~	25.16	28.07	23.90	28.00			N/A	Revised definition adopted for 2014/15. Previous data not comparable. Deleted for 2017/18. To be replaced with an alternative method of measuring re-let performance <i>TS11 % of rent lost through dwellings being vacant.</i>
TS24b Average time taken to re-let local authority housing (days) - SUPPORTED NEEDS	~	69.62	56.48	115.41	65.00			N/A	A low demand for sheltered housing results in long term voids. When these are tenanted it has a negative impact on re-let performance. Revised definition adopted for 2014/15. Previous data not comparable. Deleted for 2017/18. To be replaced with an alternative method of measuring re-let performance <i>TS11 % of rent lost through dwellings being vacant.</i>
WL_121 Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence	10.11	8.74	9.64	7.44	8.08			8.08	
WL01 No. residual bins missed per 100,000 collections	81.98	84.26	89.83	76.81	80.00			80.00	

Notes: ~ not collected/reported at this time; <sup>P</sup> data pending; <sup>R</sup> data restated; N/A – not applicable

Performance Indicator	Results 2013/14-2016/17				Targets 2016-17	2016/17 vs 2015/16	2016/17 Result	Target 2017/18	Comment
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Annual 2016/17				
	Value	Value	Value	Value					
WL06 Average time taken to remove fly tips (days)	1.08	1.09	1.06	1.03	1.09			1.09	
WL08a Number of Crime Incidents	5,462	4,971	4,765	5,170					
WL_18 Use of leisure and cultural facilities (swims and visits)	~	1,203,074	1,164,957	1,213,806					Revised definition adopted for 2014/15. Previous data not comparable.
WL24 % Building regulations applications determined within 5 weeks	73.26%	61.64%	61.98%	62.20%	50.00%			50.00%	164 decisions were made. 100% of these decisions were made within 2 months of the submission.
WL90 % of Contact Centre calls answered	90.9%	92.4%	92.0%	93.0%	91.0%			91.0%	
WL108 Average answered waiting time for callers to the contact centre (seconds)	32	30	51	60	50			60	Outturn relates to over 100,000 calls. Maintaining an efficient contact centre that resolves queries and avoids the need to call again remains integral to our customer service. Resourcing of this needs to be balanced with the promotion of channel shift. The 2017/18 target has been set to support this approach.
WL122 % Vehicle Operator Licence Inspections Carried Out within 6 Weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			100%	
WL19bii Direct dial calls answered within 10 seconds	80.51%	81.98%	81.34%	81.23%	82.21%			82.21%	Relates to 224,182 calls in year.

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### **General notes on the 2016/17 suite**

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

### **Annual Report in other formats**

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

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