



Council Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21

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Foreword

by the Leader of the Council

Following successful delivery of the Council Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18, for 2018/19 we have refreshed our vision and priorities. In order to achieve our ambitions for our economy, environment, health and wellbeing we will be focussing on:

- delivering tangible and visible improvements in the Borough
- engaging and empowering our local communities
- actively promoting the Borough as a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

For these priorities to result in meaningful change, the projects outlined in this plan have been developed as the Council's key areas of work.

Often our outcomes do not result in physical changes, however I am delighted that this year 36 new homes for rent at Beechtrees, Digmaor, will be built to replace older flats and houses and improve the appearance of the estate. Building work is also anticipated on the former Council-owned Westec site in Ormskirk resulting in 27 new houses, including 18 to be sold, with the rest being added to our housing stock.

A fine example of the Council involving the local community in decisions is the Tawd Valley Park Project where we have joined forces with Groundwork, the Environment Agency, the River Douglas Catchment Partnership, Lancashire County Council and West Lancs CVS on a major improvement scheme for the park. We will continue to build and sustain

partnerships with all sectors, and look to widen our involvement of volunteers and community groups in other services and developments as appropriate.

As public sector budgets shrink, it is important to harness the energy of our communities in order to maintain the standard of services, and quality of life we want in the Borough. In addition, community involvement has other benefits, including developing friendships, new skills and local ownership.

I am excited at the growing promotion of Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. There are now more than 100 members of the Skelmersdale Ambassadors Network, who act as a powerful advocates to influence, attract investment and encourage business growth and we are looking to grow this number. The Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group are steering Ormskirk town centre towards an even more vibrant future. Both towns now have dedicated websites for the first time, allowing targeted promotion of their different strengths.

Our services are experiencing changing demands and expectations, as well as a changing financial system. We anticipate getting fuller control of our finances by 2020, whilst losing government grant, and therefore need to make sure that we making the most of existing income streams. As well as exploring any new options for income, making efficiencies and savings throughout our service areas maximises the income available to spend on service delivery.

We are optimistic about sustaining services that meet the needs of our customers through redesigning and reshaping services. A greater engagement with partners and the community, and a more commercial outlook than traditionally associated with local authorities, is reflected

in our plans. This is an ongoing adjustment for Members, officers, and as importantly, for residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

I am proud to lead a Council with committed staff who apply our 'outcomes first' approach as the driver for the services and achieving our priorities. We will continue to develop services for the whole of our Borough so that we make a difference for all – our businesses, our places and our people.

Councillor Ian Moran
Leader of West Lancashire Borough Council

Introduction

from the Chief Executive

This plan provides a clear statement of the vision, values and priorities of the Council over the next few years. We made good progress on our priority projects during 2017/18 and will continue to build on this throughout 2018/19.

With the likelihood that the government will not be providing revenue support grant by 2020, all income to fund the Council's Services will need to be raised locally, and Councils will need to become financially self-sustaining. Here in West Lancashire we will need to make an estimated £1.5m to £2.0m of savings, efficiencies and additional income by 2020/21.

Along with achieving this challenging target, our commitment to providing the best possible service whilst minimising the impact on services and staff remains – a task which becomes more difficult each year. As always it is essential that value for money is achieved.

We continue to look to all opportunities to achieve efficiencies, and innovative ways to generate income whilst delivering the Council's Policies.

In recent years the Council has balanced the budget through a Policy Options approach developed within individual services, and during 2017/18 measures for £0.94 million ongoing efficiencies, income and savings were agreed, including £100,000 from a senior management restructure. Although this method has been extremely successful for the authority, we believe that, with the implementation of the new management structure, there is an ideal opportunity to create an organisation fit for future needs. We will therefore be commencing a Sustainable Organisation Review in 2018/19, which looks at how the Council can best deliver the services our Borough needs in a sustainable way, over the medium to long term. This will involve a fundamental review of how the Council works, including the use of new technology, how we generate income, and the way we work with communities.

In delivering this plan, our staff are the most important resource. Capable, and with a 'can do' attitude, particularly where taking on new ways of working is required, our staff recognise the need for flexibility and change to support the Council and West Lancashire as a whole. With the change agenda now part of day to day working life, one of my priorities over the coming year will be to ensure residents and staff are kept aware of the direction of the Council, and that its ambitions and priorities are clearly communicated.

Our digital by preference approach will help our customers access our services more conveniently, 24/7. A digital communications strategy will help extend our public messages, including helping to increase understanding of the Council's role compared to that of other public bodies. We have a responsibility to clearly communicate why we make changes and what those changes mean, to inform expectations and choices.

Internally our Leadership Development Programme, Development Appraisal process and annual staff e-survey will, among other things, provide us with a clearer picture of where staff see development needs not only for themselves but also for the health of the organisation. Listening to staff and addressing these points will help us to further improve our services.

Feedback from our External Auditors, and the performance monitoring undertaken shows that we are an effective organisation, but we are not complacent and there is scope to further improve, notwithstanding the financial constraints Councils are under. A big part of this will come from working together with statutory and non-statutory groups, communities and our city region neighbours.

I look forward to working with Members, staff and partners to deliver the Council's vision and priorities over the next year.

Kim Webber
Chief Executive

Financial Position

The Council has a good record of effective financial management and currently has a healthy financial position. Our latest report from our external auditors identifies that:

"The Council continues to manage its finances well in order to deliver services aligned to the needs of the local community."

"The Council has a good record of identifying savings and is working to achieve those needed for 2017/18, and identify required efficiencies for 2018/19 onwards with a number of options already identified."

This strong financial position can also be demonstrated by the fact that the latest budget projections show that we are on course to meet the financial targets for 2017/18 and that the year end accounts will show a favourable budget variance.

Like many councils across the UK, West Lancashire Borough Council continues to face a challenging financial position. As a result of reductions in government grant funding and other factors we have reduced our annual budget requirement by well over 30% over the last eight years, making savings and generating additional income of over £10 million. However even after taking these measures into account the Council still needs to save or raise additional income of between £1.5 million and £2 million by 2020/21.

The budget for 2018/19 has been set in this financial context and will maintain frontline services with targeted investment in a number of key

areas. In preparing this budget every effort has been made to maximise efficiency and income, avoid service reductions and to find funding for important projects.

There are a number of developments and initiatives that are currently taking place that demonstrate our innovative and commercially minded approach to services including:

- investment of £0.44m in Refuse and Recycling Services to make things easier for residents to store cardboard and paper for recycling by providing additional wheelie bins;
- funding of £0.18m for Phase Two of the Moor Street scheme which will see environmental improvements between Moorgate and Railway Road and demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to the Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy;
- continuing to invest in ICT, for example through our digital by preference approach, to provide better quality services to customers while at the same time increasing efficiency and reducing costs.

Looking to the future to help the Council achieve its aspirations while maintaining frontline services and continuing to balance the budget, it is going to carry out a Sustainable Organisation Review of the whole authority. The Review will examine how the Council's activities match its future needs and how to best deliver the Council's vision and priorities going forward. It will look at whether there is scope for further efficiencies and savings that have a minimal impact on frontline services, and if additional income can be generated to fund existing services or develop new services.

Organisational Overview

West Lancashire is served by a Borough Council, County Council, 20 Parish Councils and one Parish Meeting. There are 54 elected Members for 25 wards. As a Borough Council, working in partnership with these organisations as well as the police, fire service, NHS, businesses, schools, colleges, university and other stakeholders is vital for delivering lasting improvements for the benefit of the borough. Council policy is determined by Councillors, with advice from officers. The Cabinet is the Executive Councillor body for the Council. The Cabinet and senior management structures and responsibilities are provided overleaf.

The Borough Council provides services for around 113,400 people or 49,300 households (including approximately 6,050 council homes) as well as businesses and organisations. Services are delivered by around 460 full time equivalent staff (not including employees managed through our secondment agreement with Lancashire County Council/BT Lancashire Services).

As part of our service delivery, we aim to improve how efficiently we function as an organisation including ensuring value for money and focusing our financial and staff resources on outcomes that support our priorities. Through our Sustainable Organisational review during 2018/19 we are looking ahead to ensure that we can meet anticipated future needs of our communities and for the organisation.

The organisation's success depends on our staff. Our staff are the face of the Council, representing the whole organisation, and we are committed to ensuring that staffing levels are appropriate for delivering services, and that the workforce is equipped to meet our commitments to the

community and wider stakeholders, whilst fulfilling their own potential. As part of this, we are working with staff to help create a culture where our values flourish and make our organisation a great place to work. We will continue to develop the Leadership and Development programme for managers and the e-learning system to complement other traditional training methods.

The Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan demonstrate the Council's commitment to aligning its workforce planning with corporate and financial planning cycles for greatest efficiency. We have also undertaken a staff survey to help us realise our organisational potential and continue to build a great place for Council staff to work.

Members of the Cabinet with Portfolios



Leader of the Council: Councillor Ian Moran

Chairman of the Cabinet; community leadership; partnership working including One West Lancs; major policy issues not specified within other portfolios; matters of urgency; liaison for management issues. Liaison for: LGA; DCN; other Lancashire & neighbouring authorities; Parish Councils; town twinning; Lancashire & Liverpool LEPs; Marketing Lancashire. Economic Regeneration: town centre developments; external funding & inward investment; borough marketing; business grants & training advice; corporate & commercial property portfolio; asset management; valuation advice; rating appeals. Legal & democratic services: corporate procurement; Freedom of Information. Transformation: service design; customer relations; consultation & community engagement; press/media; corporate planning & performance; ICT and revenues & benefits services, including LCC/BTLS contract.



Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Human Resources

Councillor Yvonne Gagen

Properties held and the services delivered for sports development, swimming pools, sports centres, arts development, the Chapel Gallery, playgrounds and community centres. Leisure Trust Partnership. Countryside service; golf course, formal parks, open spaces, rights of way, environmental improvements. Outdoor recreation; facilities and services in partnership to develop local communities. Children's services. Human Resources; equalities.



Portfolio Holder for Communities and Older People

Councillor Claire Cooper

Voluntary sector grants. Well Skelmersdale. Community aspects of asylum seekers and refugees. Older people's issues; encouraging and supporting active, independent and healthy lives; raising the profile of and needs of older people; involving older people in the development of relevant council policies and service design; promoting positive images of older people as citizens; liaison with older peoples' networks and organisations.



Portfolio Holder for Finance

Councillor Adam Yates

Accounting services; general capital and revenue estimates and budgeting; performance against budget; annual statement of accounts; treasury management; internal audit; risk management & insurance; data quality; value for money.



Portfolio Holder for Health and Community Safety

Councillor Kevin Wright

Commercial Safety: health promotion, health & safety and food safety. Public Protection and Licensing: licensing for taxis, public entertainment/alcohol, charities etc; pest control and animal welfare. Environmental Protection: environmental monitoring & sampling; public health; pollution control; nuisance complaints; foul drainage & private sewers; flytipping; dog control; unsanitary premises; disposal of the dead. Private Sector Housing: renovation & disabled facilities grants; home energy efficiency; Home Care Link; homelessness; unfit homes. Community safety, emergency planning/business continuity. Social cohesion.



Portfolio Holder for Planning

Councillor John Hodson

Planning policy; Local Development Framework; development control, building control & enforcement; conservation of built & natural environment; arboricultural & landscape services. Council-owned unadopted footways, highways & grit bins; liaison with utility companies/Highway Authority for highway works & transport issues; off-street public car parking & enforcement; Ormskirk market & bus station; land drainage & coastal engineering; 'green' & sustainability issues.



Portfolio Holder for Street Scene

Councillor Kevin Wilkie

Transport: fleet/ garage/depot facilities; street cleansing; grounds maintenance; stores. Waste disposal & recycling duties as a waste collection authority; waste management, including through partnership; domestic & trade refuse; green waste & recyclables collection; farm round.



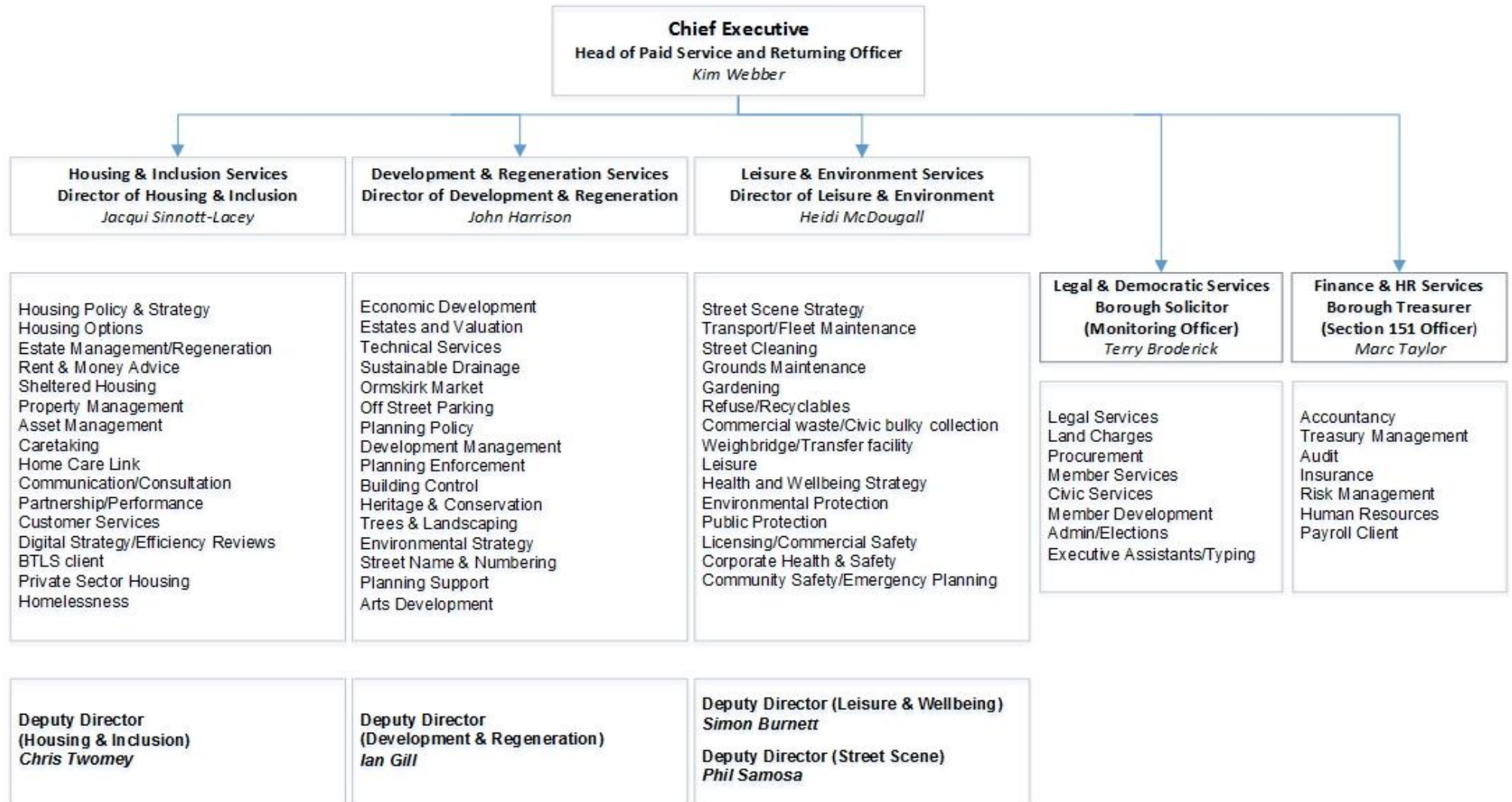
Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services

Councillor Jenny Forshaw

Public sector housing: repairs & maintenance; housing allocations; tenancy management; rent & money advice; sheltered housing; tenant empowerment/participation. Housing strategy; housing advice service; Supporting People Initiative. Links with social services, health providers and regulatory bodies. Housing finance including self-financing business plan.

Jan 2018

Senior Officer Management Structure



Council Plan 2018/19 - 2020/21

Our Vision

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

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

Our Values

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

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

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

Equality – promoting equality and seeking to reduce inequality

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

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

Priorities and Key Projects

Deliver tangible and visible improvements in the Borough, by:

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

Engage and empower our local communities, by:

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

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

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

Organisational Sustainability Review

Our Priorities & Key Projects

Working to achieve the priorities to deliver the vision provides a clear strategic direction for the organisation and allows resources to be targeted in the most effective and efficient way. Our identified priorities are:

- deliver tangible and visible improvements in the Borough
- engage and empower our local communities
- actively promote the Borough as a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

Service delivery throughout the Council supports our priorities, however the projects for 2018/19 have been highlighted as contributing significantly to achieving them. Our plan allows us to prioritise and therefore co-ordinate financial and staffing requirements. An annual refresh of a three year plan ensures that the plan remains in line with current thinking and the environment in which we operate. Progress on the projects, including the key measures and targets, will be monitored and reported during the year.

Deliver Tangible and Visible Improvements in the Borough

We will:

- ensure new homes, jobs and services are located in the most sustainable places
- create a framework for delivering infrastructure facilities
- provide a wide range of opportunities for promoting health and wellbeing in the community
- reduce the build and operational costs of our leisure provision
- regenerate the town centre in Skelmersdale
- establish mechanisms to support new and growing businesses through the provision of suitable facilities for sale or rent
- embed the development of employment and skills training opportunities in schemes wherever possible.

Completing the review of the Local Plan

The review of the current Local Plan 2012-2027 will ensure that land use plans for the Borough remain in line with evolving national planning policy and local needs. The Local Plan contains the vision and strategy for development in West Lancashire. It not only ensures that the new homes, jobs and services required by communities are located in the most sustainable places, but also provides the framework for delivering the necessary infrastructure facilities and other development to make this possible. The review processes and timescales are outlined within the Local Development Scheme. Taking around four years, the full review will involve extensive consultation and culminate in a new Local Plan and revised selected Supplementary Planning Documents. During

2018/19, the review will progress to development and consultation of the preferred options document, with the entire review due to conclude in 2020. 2018/19 will see:

- Local Plan Preferred Options Document considered by Cabinet.
- Monitor the Local Plan through the Annual Monitoring Report.
- Publication / Pre-Submission Consultation.
- Submission to Planning Inspectorate.

Developing new leisure facilities as health and wellbeing hubs

Significant physical improvements to the borough can be achieved through replacement leisure facilities in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. Our leisure facilities are the biggest assets we have for supporting and encouraging people of all ages to live active lives and enjoy healthy lifestyles. Collaborating with the West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group around options for incorporating a health centre/doctors surgery into the facilities will in the longer term provide a wider range of opportunities for further promoting health and wellbeing in the community and also help to reduce build and operational costs. 2018/19 will see:

- Completion of soft market testing.
- Business case development.
- Completion of design process.
- Progression to next phase of design and procurement.

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

Our main scheme in Skelmersdale will secure regeneration in the form of new commercial, leisure and residential development alongside existing property and environmental enhancements across a large area of land within and surrounding Skelmersdale town centre. The project is being implemented in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, LCC and St Modwen. We will be working with our partners and housing developers to secure development on three large residential sites adjacent to the town centre of over 200 houses.

Following success against a judicial challenge, the Council and its partners are now refreshing the work around the retail/leisure market element of the development. In 2018/19 we aim to:

- Review the approved retail/leisure scheme to ensure it meets current market demands and undertake all actions identified as necessary by the review.
- Agree Heads of Terms with interested parties for the Town Centre development.
- Explore all options to ensure that the scheme can either be delivered in its entirety or in a phased approach.

Establishing a Development Company

- The establishment of a sustainable and profitable Development Company will deliver new commercial, industrial and residential development of Council-owned land and also consider wider development opportunities bringing investment and growth to the borough. Grant funding will be sought to support the establishment, in particular through the Homes & Communities Agency's Accelerated Construction programme. This will be used to unlock housing development on Council-owned sites. The company will take development forward in tune with market conditions. Long-term outcomes will include direct support of new and growing businesses, increased income through Council Tax and Business Rates, and employment and skills training opportunities in the construction industry. Initial work will include:
- Set up Development Company in shadow form including financial and governance arrangements, appointment of key staff, identification of key development sites to support the Business Plan.

Then subject to council approval,

- Later consider the Business Plan and formation of the Development Company including registration, appointment of the board and key officers and implement the development programme.

There are other work streams also supporting this priority. The **Moor Street Gateway** project will see the enhancement or redevelopment of the existing bus station and car park site emphasising its importance as a gateway into the town and contributing to the regeneration of Ormskirk town centre. The former **Westec Site** in Ormskirk, adjacent to

the Council offices, will be developed for 27 houses. The **Beechtrees scheme** in Digmaor, Skelmersdale is revitalising and enhancing the council estate and maintaining a modernised and sustainable housing stock with the building of 36 new dwellings. We will provide a supply of ready to build housing sites including through the **Community Land Auction** model involving the Homes & Communities Agency. Longer term, working with LCC on their **West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan** is supporting improvements to transport infrastructure such as around the Skelmersdale rail station location and the Ormskirk town centre movement strategy.

Engage and empower our local communities

We will:

- develop our parks and countryside sites for wider health and wellbeing, economic and social value
- sustain leisure facilities where possible through different models of service delivery and budget control
- support the uptake of basic online skills and access to the internet
- increase awareness and uptake of digital Council services
- utilise Overview & Scrutiny to examine the potential of community groups' involvement in service delivery.

Delivering the Master Plan for Tawd Valley park

The local community has been integral to progressing the Tawd Valley project. Significant environmental and recreational enhancements will see improvements to footpaths and landscapes, cycle paths, wetland habitat areas, a heritage trail, picnic spaces and the creation of an informal event space in the amphitheatre. Such an extensive scheme has required collaboration between a number of partners: Groundwork, the Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, the River Douglas Catchment Partnership, SHARES and West Lancs CVS. In the summer of 2017, extensive public consultation through public events and presentations, school and college workshops, press coverage, a visioning event, and an on-line survey resulted in a draft masterplan. External funding has been secured to take the plan forward and further consultation held on an updated plan. Over a 3-5 year period the park can be developed to instil pride in the local community and significantly contribute to the wider health and wellbeing of Skelmersdale. In 2018/19 we will:

- Develop scheme implementation plans.
- Establish sustainable staffing and community support via a Friends of Tawd Valley Park group.

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

We have explored alternative ways to maintain and develop our parks and countryside sites for wider economic and social value whilst minimising the draw on Council resources. A trial project at Abbey Lakes

in Up Holland involved volunteers from EDs Place, a community-based organisation that provides help and support to ex-forces personnel. Working with the Parks and Countryside Ranger service, the participants gained new skills whilst upgrading the site, for example through tree management, drainage works, de-silting streams and establishing a new fishing club. Discussions are taking place with West Lancashire College to identify possible Land Management courses that would allow students to gain both academic and vocational qualifications, whilst helping to maintain our Countryside Parks. Other potential partnerships will be explored in order to replicate the success of Abbey Lakes. It is anticipated that this will commence with Tawd Valley Park. In 2018/19 we will:

- Review the Abbey lakes pilot.
- Establish timelines for project(s)

Facilitating the asset transfer of existing leisure facilities in North Meols

We are working with key partners (Department of Health, West Lancs Community Leisure, North Meols Parish Council and the West Lancs School Sports Partnership) to identify a cost-effective delivery model which will facilitate the continued operation of Banks Leisure Centre. In 2018/19 we will:

- Explore options for community transfer with key partners.
- Review proposals and business plans.
- Reduce the Leisure Management Contract fee, if the transfer takes place.

Delivering digital inclusion initiatives

Our work around digital development continues to expand to meet both efficiency and public expectations. We are also encouraging the use of digital technology with those members of community who are less confident in this area, with the aim of increasing basic online skills and access to the internet and therefore increasing the uptake of West Lancashire Borough Council's digital services. Initiatives include engaging with customers at customer service points to understand why they are using face to face contact, attending local events to showcase on line services and providing further support at sheltered housing schemes, which will help promote self-service and further strengthen our customer service. In 2018/19 we will:

- Monitor needs and attitudes of residents around their digital aspirations via survey.
- Encourage and support direct uptake of online Universal Credit claims.

There are other work streams also supporting this priority. Our **financial inclusion strategy** for tenants helps those affected by welfare reforms to sustain their tenancy and to increase their opportunities for employability through the Money Advice Service. We are a partner in the **Well Skelmersdale** project, a diverse collaboration across community, voluntary, faith, charitable, business, enterprise and public sectors committed to creating conditions that allow the community to reach its full potential by creating healthy environments for healthy living. Implementing the **Homelessness Strategy** will extend the range of housing advice services to meet current and future challenges, enhance the housing offer to all homeless applicants in the Borough and improve health and wellbeing. Our **Health and Wellbeing delivery plan** targets the reduction of health inequalities in the borough, for example

through the More Positive Together programme directed at tenants in the most deprived areas to improve their health, activity levels, skills and employability.

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

We will:

- extend the influence of the Skelmersdale Place Board in promoting opportunities for business development
- foster Ormskirk's profile as a visitor destination
- cultivate brand identification for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale
- maintain West Lancashire's profile and ambitions within the wider regional agenda
- promote satisfaction with the area as a place to live
- encourage satisfaction with the way the Council runs things
- expand understanding of how the Council provides value for money
- ensure core messages are effectively delivered and received by all sections of the community and staff
- promote West Lancashire as a place to operate an organisation or business in.

Engaging businesses and communities in enhancing and promoting Ormskirk and Skelmersdale

As traditional shopping habits, ways of doing business and leisure activities evolve, to provide what people are looking for, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale are adapting and evolving. The Council, Ormskirk Community Partnership, local businesses (through the Business Action Group), Businesses in the Community, Edge Hill University, and the Student Union have joined forces as the Ormskirk Town Centre Management Group to ensure the long term economic and social viability of Ormskirk. Key initiatives will focus on town centre events and place promotion of Ormskirk and the wider area as a visitor destination. In Skelmersdale, key public and private sector leaders including from businesses, the Council, Edge Hill University, West Lancashire College and Homes England are driving forward the promotion of Skelmersdale through the Skelmersdale Place Board and Skelmersdale Ambassadors. The Board oversaw the successful launch of the branding and Skelmersdale Story, and is now looking to sustain this work by growing the Ambassadors network, establishing new relationships, providing information on opportunities and encouraging inward investment. In 2018/19 we will:

- Increase Skelmersdale Ambassador numbers.
- Facilitate a series of year round events promoting Ormskirk.

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

The two main towns of West Lancashire are now benefitting from their own distinctive branding and websites. The business-focussed *Let's Talk Skelmersdale* website highlights Skelmersdale's strengths as a place to do business by providing information for business support, employment and skills, lifestyle and education. It targets both existing businesses in the area and companies looking to take advantage of the opportunities in the area. The *Discover Ormskirk* website and supporting social media is aimed at visitors to Ormskirk and West Lancashire, highlighting attractions, shops and events. The aim is to encourage visitors to the borough and into the town centre. Through increased and persistent use the unique branding will create a distinct profile for the borough.

- Promote and expand the use of Ormskirk and Skelmersdale place branding within the Council and in the community.
- Increase footfall into Ormskirk town centre.
- Develop the content of both websites.
- Increase visitor numbers to the websites.
- Engage people through social media to encourage them to visit West Lancashire.

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

Developing a digital communications strategy will help us meet the current trends and changing needs of how customers seek and receive information, building on existing channels of media and public relations. We will continue to work with partners and diverse stakeholder groups

to effectively communicate our responsibilities, services, key policies and programmes in line with our priorities to promote a positive image of the borough and its achievements. 2018/19 will see us:

- Develop a draft strategy, action plan and measures of success.
- Track and manage digital communication programmes.
- Assist residents to feel the Council keeps them well informed about our services and benefits.
- Ensure accessibility is maximised within online service development.

Engaging with Liverpool City Region and Lancashire authorities

Although we are a Lancashire authority, West Lancashire's geographical position means we benefit from our active engagement with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Within Lancashire, the 'shadow' Combined Authority has been in operation since July 2016. It has a focus on economy, skills and transport matters. One democratically accountable body will avoid duplication and provide more efficient services; create a stronger basis for bidding for funding; make best use of Council and Government money; and speed up decision-making on a pan-Lancashire basis. Despite some Lancashire Council's doubts over the existing proposals, West Lancashire remains involved in the process and is working with Lancashire Authorities to take this project forward. In 2018/19 we will:

- Play an active role as an Associate Member of Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.
- Further develop the Lancashire Plan based on the five core themes – Skilled Lancashire; Better Homes for Lancashire;

Connected Lancashire; Prosperous Lancashire and Public Services Working for Lancashire.

- Continue to play an active role in the Housing theme of the Shadow Combined Authority for Lancashire.

There are other work streams also supporting this priority. We will continue to work through the **Private Sector Housing Strategy** to provide residents of West Lancashire decent homes which are safe, secure, warm, and in good repair. Progress the **Economic Development delivery plan actions** with partners to address employment opportunities, availability of housing, environmental improvements, raising skills and training levels, provide support for indigenous businesses and attract new investment

Monitoring Progress

The plan projects are resourced and managed through budget and service action planning. They are monitored directly by the relevant service areas and through budget reports, service action plans, the corporate risk register and individual project reports to committees and working groups as appropriate. In addition, progress on the projects are reported to Members half-yearly and as an annual report. A set of performance indicators spanning various service areas are also reported quarterly to Members to help the authority understand how well it is performing.

Our priorities and resulting projects are informed by working closely with partners and through various consultation and stakeholder engagement activities. We recognise that people who provide and use our services come from diverse backgrounds and have different experiences and needs. We develop, commission and deliver services in a way that will help overcome discrimination and disadvantage.

We aim to keep the public well informed about all our services, how we run things and how we are working to achieve value for money. As well as specific consultation for particular proposed projects, we have a continuous customer engagement programme for housing services and an annual citizen and stakeholder survey. The annual survey is used to gather views about Council spending, better understand the usage and opinions of Council services, gauge community safety perceptions, and receive views on the Council as a whole. Public opinion was directly sought to inform significant projects including the *Tawd Valley Park Project* and the *Open Space Study* as a piece of evidence for the emerging West Lancashire Local Plan. During 2017/18 we also undertook a Meeting the Budget Challenge consultation to inform our approach to service reviews and balancing the budget.

If you require any further information, or copies of this document in an alternative format, please contact:

Partnership & Performance, West Lancashire Borough Council,
Elson House, 49-51 Westgate, Sandy Lane Centre,
Skelmersdale, WN8 8LP

transformation@westlancls.gov.uk

01695 577177