

Chorley Council  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
2019/20



# Welcome to Chorley Council's annual report

This report presents Chorley Council's annual report for 2019/20. It provides an overview of activities and achievements over the last year, outlining the key steps that we have taken to ensure that we continue to deliver our vision and priorities as outlined below:

## Our vision:

A proactive community leader, supporting the borough and all its residents whether in rural or urban areas, to reach their full potential through working in partnership to deliver services that achieve the best outcomes for local people and protect vulnerable people



**Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all**



**A strong local economy**



**Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities**



**An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area**



## Council Leader's Introduction

From Councillor Alistair Bradley,  
Executive Leader and Executive Member  
for Economic Development and Public  
Service Reform

There have been so many great achievements during 2019/20 and I am proud to show how these have contributed to delivering better outcomes for Chorley.

The extension to Market Walk is now complete and was opened in December 2019 creating an exciting new town centre offer, giving our traders and the wider economy a real boost.

We have created more than 570 future jobs across the borough through our Business Grant programme as well as our Digital Creative scheme. These high-quality jobs will help move our local economy forward and benefit our residents.

Over the next year we will be focusing on making some key investments in developments across the borough to continue boosting economic reform and growth across the borough.

This year has presented an unprecedented challenge with the emergency response for the COVID-19 crisis. Over the past few months, we have continued to keep our everyday services going while providing dedicated support to our businesses, communities and staff through this crisis. The support we have seen across the community is truly awe inspiring and I have been proud to witness our community come together like this to support one another in times of crisis.

Over the next year we will work with communities and businesses to build an even better Chorley on the back of this crisis.



## Overview of Resources

From Councillor Peter Wilson, Deputy  
Executive Leader, Executive Member  
(Resources)

I'm pleased to report that, despite financial challenges, the performance of the council remains high and this year we have demonstrated that we will not only maintain vital services, but improve them.

We continue to invest to deliver numerous events across the year which have allowed us to engage with residents whilst raising the profile of Chorley as a visitor destination with almost 72,000 people attending our events in 2019/20, a 6.5% increase on last year to contribute to the strong local economy.

We have made great progress this year on shared services with South Ribble Borough Council, this ambitious move will mean a significant shift in how the authorities are structured, providing more resilience, opportunities to improve services and better value for money for our residents.

We continue to support Inspire, our local youth zone and it has celebrated its first anniversary in May 2019. Membership reached 5,400 in its first year, with 1 in 3 young people across Chorley now members and we continue to invest in local bus routes to make sure that residents from across the borough are able to access council services.

"We have achieved a lot over the last year, despite some big challenges, but we won't stop there in making Chorley an even greater place to live, work and visit whilst continuing to support our residents."

# In a typical week in 2019/20 we.....

Assisted  
**1,273** residents  
with service requests via email,  
phone or online



Welcomed  
**1,052** visitors  
to Astley Hall and Park Complex



Recycled  
**360** tonnes  
of household waste



Welcomed  
**22,981** visitors  
to Council owned leisure centres

Collected  
**76,250** wheelie bins



Welcomed  
**69,104** visitors  
to the town centre

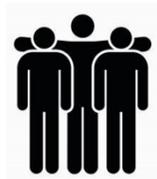


Prevented  
**14** people  
from potentially becoming homeless



Benefitted  
**556** residents  
with health and wellbeing opportunities

Supported  
**9** community groups  
to improve



Engaged with  
**32** businesses  
providing support and advice





## Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all

- Residents who take pride in where they live and their achievements
- Residents who are all able to take an active part in their local and wider community
- Easy access to high quality public services, both face to face and online



### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2019/20:

- **790** residents successfully completed basic digital skills training
- **135** groups signed up to the Time Credits programme
- **23,771** volunteer hours earned



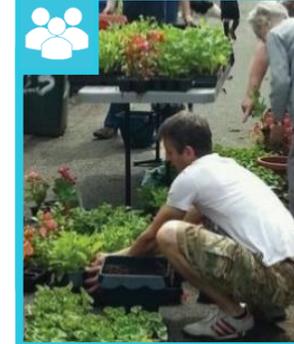
In 2019/20 we continued to improve digital inclusion across the borough, supporting 790 adults to gain digital skills through free courses held in venues right across the borough in partnership with Lancashire Adult Learning and Citizens Advice. Our Digital Champions programme has supported volunteers to deliver digital sessions at AgeUK, providing guidance and support to our elderly residents. This is important to ensure that people have equal access as services become increasingly digitalised.



We successfully launched an intergenerational project at Holy Cross, where pupils exchanged cards and letters with elderly residents in the community. The school have embedded the programme as a regular initiative, ensuring that it will continue to be a sustainable model to promote community involvement and volunteering.



Small Community Grants were awarded to voluntary community and faith sector groups from across the borough, including to Astley and Buckshaw Junior Football Club for new equipment, to Whittle & Clayton-le-Woods Cricket Club for new benches, as well as Pauline's Angels to provide food and meals on Christmas Day for those unable to afford a Christmas meal.



The Time Credits programme, which provides support to volunteer within the local community, has 135 groups signed up, with just under 24,000 hours earned this year.

It has been proven that volunteering reduces feelings of isolation, encourages skill sharing and improves mental health.



We refurbished Clayton Brook Village Hall to create a Community Café. This is now being run by a Residents Group and the café has hosted educational courses aimed at upskilling residents and first aid courses.



We established the Adlington Friendship Group, which has provided a new group for socialising in Adlington, encouraging people to get involved in their communities and combating social isolation. With a core attendance of 20 to 30 people per session, the group's bi-weekly meetings have proved popular with residents.

## Clean safe and healthy communities



- Clean and safe streets
- Reduced health inequalities
- A wide range of quality recreational activities
- High quality, affordable and suitable housing
- High quality play areas, parks, and open spaces in both urban and rural locations



### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2019/20

**81** Affordable homes delivered

**1.4%** reduction in the number of long-term empty properties across the borough

**43.36%** of household waste recycled



In October 2019, we installed a public access defibrillator at Withnell Pharmacy, this was accompanied by a community awareness session. The total number of defibrillators in the borough is now six, further improving access to vital lifesaving equipment.



In May 2019, we organised the very first Chorley 10k and 2k Family Run. The event saw Chorley's Streets and historic Astley Park awash with 1,000 runners competing in the 10k and around 300 children and families competing in the shorter 2k run.



Neighbourhood Priority projects were delivered across the borough including; the installation of community notice boards and a Community Clean Up event in Mawdesley, the enhancement of footpaths from Astley Village to Astley Park, improvements to the green spaces around Astley Village shopping area, and the development of a tree planting scheme in Euxton.



Intergenerational cooking classes were delivered in Coppull in partnership with local schools to address the cycle of poor nutrition and obesity by engaging both children and adults in regular interactive sessions to create resources to keep and use.



Inspire celebrated its first anniversary in May 2019. Membership reached 5,400 in its first year, with 1 in 3 young people across Chorley now members, and 65,000 visits made to the £5 million development.

An additional £12,000 has been allocated to enable the Youth Zone to deliver activities in different areas throughout the borough.



We transformed a piece of neglected woodland in Chorley South East into a community garden. The site, next to St George's School, now provides a peaceful space for residents and school children that will improve their physical and mental wellbeing by connecting them with nature.



Throughout 2019/20 improvements have been made to 23 play, open space and playing pitches across the borough to help create safer and healthier communities. This includes creation of a landscaped open place for play at Ridings Play Area, installation of safety surfacing at Astley Play Area, improvements to the natural habitat around Cripplegate Lane in Hoghton and installation of trees and hedging at Abbey Village Play Area.

## A strong local economy

- A vibrant town centre and villages
- A strong and expanding business sector across the whole of the borough
- Access to high quality employment and education opportunities across the borough



### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2019/20

**93** residents completed bespoke training courses to support their employment prospects

**572** projected jobs created through council support or intervention

**961** business supported by the Council a **19%** increase



Strawberry Fields Digital Hub opened in October 2019 providing a state-of-the-art business centre for digital and creative businesses. The £8.5 million development has since welcomed tenants such as 3D printing company, Ultimaker, and a web development company, Brickweb Technology. The facility has put Chorley on the map in the rapidly growing digital sector in Lancashire and will help to provide hundreds of high value jobs.



We completed and opened the Market Walk Extension in 2019 which has become a key asset in the town centre as businesses have filled the new commercial spaces, including Reel Cinema, M&S, Loungers, and Escape Entertainment.

The development has become a focal point for visitors, and in early December there was a 6% increase in footfall to the Market Walk area of the town centre, with the week beginning 16 December receiving 104,740 visitors.



In November 2019, we made the ambitious move to purchase one of the region's major distribution sites. The acquisition of the 300,000 sq ft warehouse at Buckshaw Village will allow us to continue to invest in and improve services whilst supporting the local economy and job market.



We have delivered numerous events across the year which have allowed us to engage with residents whilst raising the profile of Chorley as a visitor destination. More than 71,000 people attended our events in 2019/20, including the Chorley Flower Show, Chorley Live, Picnic in the Park and the Christmas attractions.



In July 2019 we hosted the annual Choose Chorley Networking Event at the Digital Hub, promoting Chorley as a business centre. The event focused on the potential of digital in Lancashire and was attended by leading regional figures, including the Director of Digital Lancashire and UCLAN's Senior Lecturer in Digital Technology Solutions. In total, 1650 business engagements were made by the Business Development Service over 2019/20.



We helped to create more than 570 projected jobs through our Business Grant programme as well as our Digital Creative scheme. These programmes aim to support start-ups, entrepreneurs and existing businesses to ensure a thriving and diverse local economy that can accommodate the ambitions of residents.

## An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area

- A council that consults and engages with residents
- An ambitious council that continually strives to improve
- Cohesive communities in and around our rural and urban areas

### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2019/20

**13%** increase in the number of service requests received online

**28%** reduction in customer dissatisfaction with the service received from the Council year on year

**7%** improvement in the average time to process new benefits claims and change events to **3.72 days**

We have continued to fund and protect bus routes across the borough to support services that were at risk of withdrawal enabling our residents continued access to vital services such as the hospital and town centre.

We declared a Climate Emergency in November 2019, recognising our crucial role in tackling climate change and unique position as a local authority. Since then, we have approved a budget of £500,000 to deliver green initiatives.

We have continued to transform our ways of working, aiming to do more for less, whilst retaining a high level of service. Our transformation programme has seen budget efficiency savings and increased income totalling £615k.

The multi-agency group (PIVOT) have managed 138 cases in 19/20, with 36% cases involving mental health issues as main reason for support and further 18% of cases involving issues with housing. This has provided joined up support for vulnerable individuals and achieved better outcomes for wellbeing.

In January 2020, our councillors with their counterparts at South Ribble agreed to share services across the two councils. The ambitious move will mean a significant shift in how the authorities are structured, providing more resilience, opportunities to improve services and better value for money.



2019 saw the first residents move into Primrose Gardens following its completion. The pioneering development created 65 modern and accessible apartments for those aged 55 and over and is equipped with a dance studio, hairdressers, and café facilities. The residential village will enable elderly residents to live independently for longer, integrate with their local community, whilst supporting their care needs.

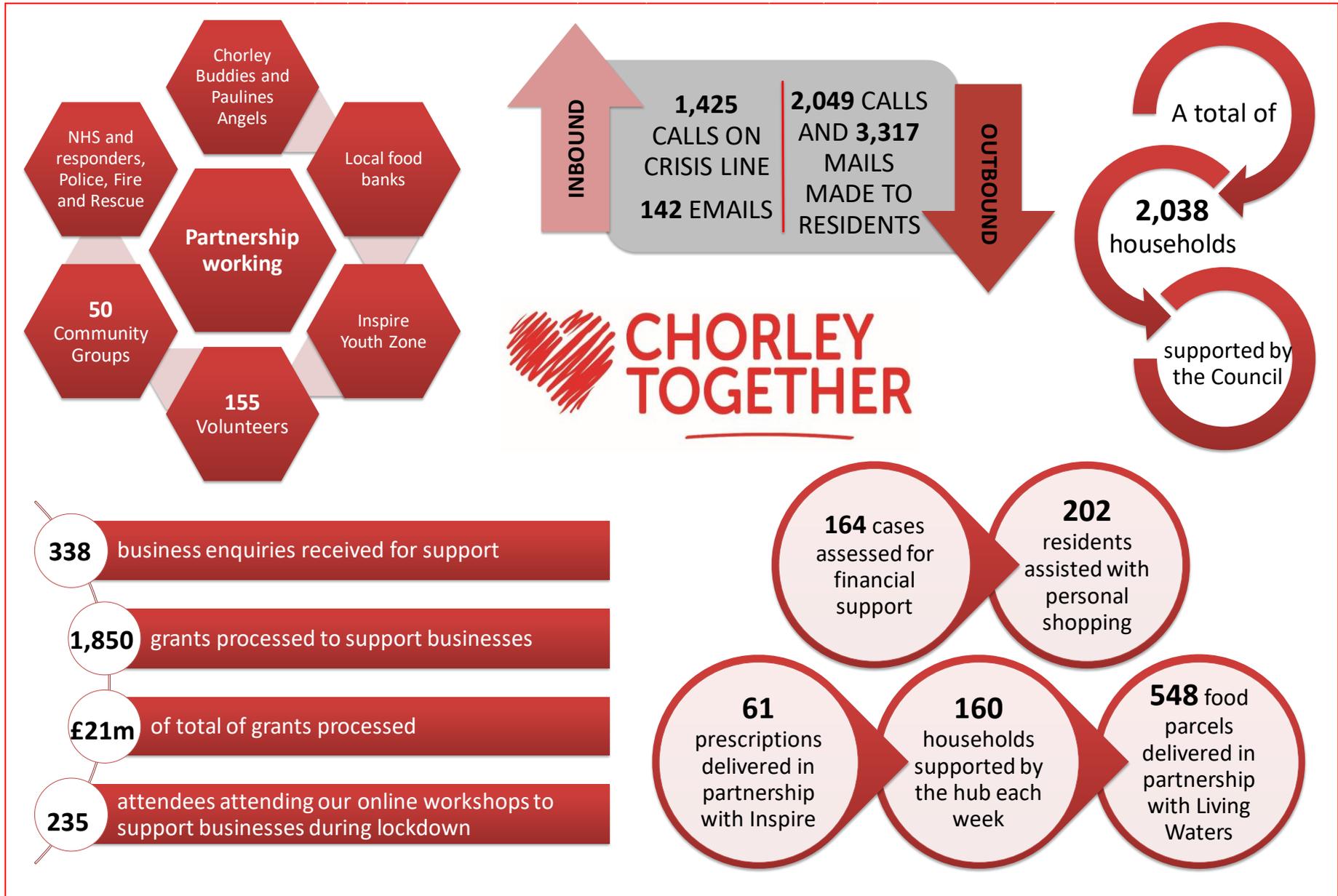
We delivered the Chorley Council Experience, an interactive organisational development exhibit that saw staff take part in activities around our values and future projects as well as celebrate past achievements. The event sought to build a resilient workplace culture, through which we can continue to support the ambitions of both our residents and our workforce.



In February 2020, we hosted the Digital Careers Event, which aimed to promote digital careers and support future workforce development. The event featured 15 exhibitors from digital employers and training providers and was attended by 6 schools and over 500 people.

# COVID-19 community response

In March 2020, we launched the 'Chorley Together' programme to help support the most vulnerable in the borough through the on-going COVID-19 crisis and this has been a collective effort from the council, key organisations and the local community to come together to help those who are most vulnerable. The Community Hub has been running since 23 March 2020 and has involved a total of 47 council staff. There has also been delivery of assistance with personal shopping and prescriptions delivery from key partners such as Chorley Buddies, Pauline's Angels, Inspire Youth Zone and NHS responders. We also had many volunteers from the community come forward including doctors and nurses, lorry drivers, managers of companies that have had to close, staff who have been furloughed and those who have retired to volunteer. The key statistics below outline the response work and support delivered to support the community through the COVID-19 pandemic.



The council has continued to invest in improvements right across the borough that have helped deliver better long term outcomes for residents in 2019/20.



## An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area



The **£10.5m** Primrose Gardens development was opened. The facility has provided much needed extra care accommodation for those aged 55 and older in the heart of the town centre.



**£724k** investment in the purchasing of homes for refugees as part of the Syrian Refugee Programme.



**£15k** investment in Food Provision Schemes



## A strong local economy



The **£8.5m** Strawberry Fields Digital Hub was launched and has placed Chorley at the centre of the rapidly expanding digital sector in Lancashire.



The **£15.3m** Market Walk Extension was opened, which has enhanced Chorley as a commercial, business, and visitor hub



## Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all



**£890k** spending on home adaptations, enabling residents to live independently for longer



**£40k** investment on bus stops around Buckshaw which have improved accessibility to transport.



## Clean safe and healthy communities



**£2.7m** allocated for the Westway sports hub development. Supported by Football Foundation funding this ambitious project will include football pitches and an athletics track, providing a first-class sports facility for Chorley



**£3m** secured towards the project to build Whittle Surgery which will greatly improve health capacity and provision in the area



**£300k** investment in play and open spaces across the borough



**£12.4k** investment on improvements to council leisure centres

## Future Challenges

Looking ahead, the council will need to manage the ongoing impact of public service cuts and increasing demand for services alongside the long term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges that this will create for the council and the communities it serves. However, there will also be opportunities to 'build back better' as we learn from a truly community focussed response and build new relationships with residents and wider partners to achieve sustainable services for the future.

**Over the next year we will need to continue to consider:**

### RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

To meet the changing needs of our borough within the financial constraints the council faces, it is vital that we continue to improve as an organisation and transform the way that we work.

As well as looking at our processes and systems, developing our workforce and investing in new technology, we will further extend our shared services with South Ribble to build in additional capacity and resilience.

### PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The recent pandemic has seen us need to work with our partners more closely than ever before, sharing resources and making better use of technology. We must build on this learning to shape our future approach to partnership working so that we can continue to deliver sustainable public services.

As a council we will work through our public service reform partnership and build on our relationship with South Ribble Council to coordinate activity across the two boroughs.

### UNCERTAINTY

Financial and political uncertainty at a local and national level, including the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit, will mean that we need to plan for a range of scenarios so that we can sustain high quality services for our residents.

We will continue to work towards a balanced budget, delivering the Medium Term Financial Strategy and driving forward our transformation programme to ensure that the organisation is in a strong position to respond to future challenges.

### COVID-19 RECOVERY

Over the next 12 months, there will be a focus on delivering our recovery plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The council has a clear plan to sustain support for the most vulnerable residents, get council services back on track, protect local businesses and deliver the projects and improvements that matter most to our residents. We will support employability and work proactively to return to local economic growth.

## Looking ahead to 2020/21

Looking forward to 2020/21 we will continue to focus on delivering positive outcomes for residents against our corporate priorities, this will include the following:



### Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all

**Undertake renovation works at Astley Hall:** Conducting vital conservation improvements and transforming the visitor experience.

**Refresh the Council's website:** Providing customer focused and efficient digital services that are accessible and easy to use.

**Develop a programme of community resilience building work:** Implementing a community resilience framework to develop self-sufficient and healthier communities.



### Clean safe and healthy communities

**Progress improvements to Tatton recreation ground and surrounding area:** Reviewing the feasibility of the site and developing plans and designs for its future development.

**Improve play and community spaces across the borough:** Providing high quality facilities for residents and improving access to open space, sports and recreation.

**Implement the Housing Strategy action plan:** Securing high quality housing, preventing homelessness and supporting people to remain independent in their own homes.



### A strong local economy

**Bring forward employment land at Alker Lane:** Finalising site plans and securing planning permission ahead of the site's future development.

**Deliver improvements to the town centre:** Enhancing the retail and visitor experience of the town centre to ensure it remains a vibrant commercial hub.

**Develop a business plan for the wholly owned company:** Improving how we manage and acquire assets so that we can support further economic development in the borough.



### An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area

**Deliver shared council services:** Creating efficient and value for money shared services between South Ribble Borough Council and ourselves.

**Make our borough cleaner and more attractive:** Enhancing the borough as a great place to live, work and visit.

**Work with our partners to deliver sustainable public services:** Developing intelligence led services that address wider wellbeing factors and improve outcomes for residents.

**Deliver a project to support Chorley Council's commitment to the green agenda:** Improving our environmental performance in line with the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

