

Report of	Meeting	Date
Leader of the Conservative Group/Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group	Council	17.11.20

CONSERVATIVE GROUP ALTERNATIVE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2020/21

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To present the Conservative Group's proposed Corporate Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the strategy is noted in debating the development and approval of the Council Corporate Strategy for 2020/21.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- As we continue to support our communities through the Covid-19 pandemic, this report sets out the Conservative Group's proposed Corporate Strategy to go beyond the statutory duty expected of a borough Council by putting the wellbeing of residents and businesses at the heart of everything it does, while providing high quality services at a cost the people of Chorley can afford.
- The strategy is guided by five key themes: environment, economy and education, community safety, housing, and health. The environment theme has been strengthened, with a particular focus on the green agenda. The themes are supported by eleven projects to deliver outcomes against each area through the core values of excellence, innovation, and value for money.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	✓	A strong local economy	✓
Clean, safe and healthy communities	✓	An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	✓

Conservative Group Alternative Corporate Strategy 2020/21

Our Council Plan

We seek to go beyond the statutory duty expected of a borough Council by putting the wellbeing of our residents and businesses at the heart of everything we do, while providing high quality services at a cost the people of Chorley can afford.

Over the last 12 months, the world has changed dramatically as a result of Covid-19. This will continue to have an impact on our residents and the support that they will need from the Council. As a Council we must also change, and our alternate strategy will see a Council built around Excellence, Innovation, and Value for Money.

When we talk about wellbeing, this isn't just about access to local health services. It's also about doing all we can to provide suitable homes in the right areas for people to live in a safe, healthy, and protected environment, whilst securing a strong local economy that provides the jobs and services we need. It's about our lifestyle choices and opportunities to plan for our future, with services that keep people living independently for longer.

In recent years we have seen our Council invest millions of pounds in large and expensive projects, such as the Mark Walk Extension, Multi Storey Carparking, Strawberry Fields Digital Office Park, Youth Zone, and Primrose Gardens Extra Care Village, which have all been based in and around our town centre. We are told that the current Labour administration will continue to, so called, invest in the acquisition of large commercial premises, such as warehousing sheds and unoccupied retail and commercial buildings. These are again based in and around our town centre and to what end?

We believe it's not these large development projects that make a difference to the residents of the whole borough. Our strategy is based on the many small changes that can result in a significant impact to each and every one of us, and as your Council we can play our part in supporting, promoting, and delivering these.

We will look at how we can work better across our teams and with our partners to make this happen using our five themes:

- THE ENVIRONMENT
- ECONOMY & EDUCATION
- COMMUNITY SAFETY
 - HOUSING

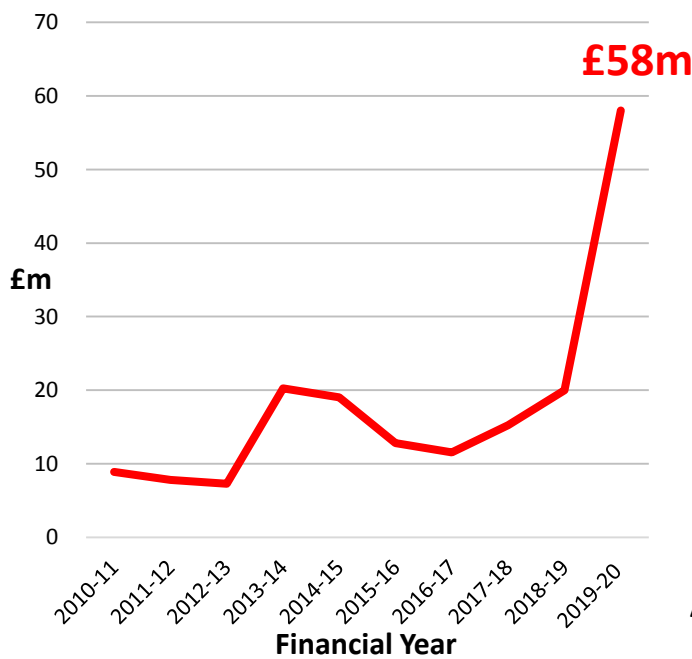
- HEALTH

We have underpinned these five themes with three core values that will support everything we do:

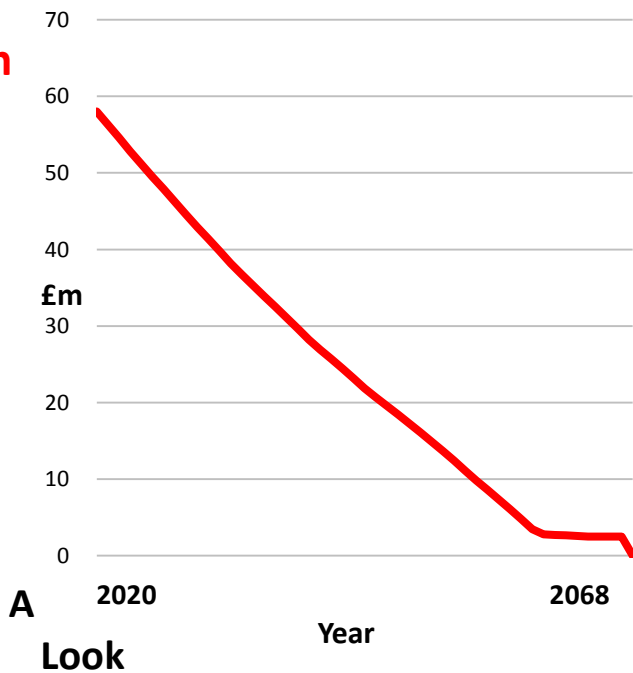
Excellence, Innovation and Value for Money.

The current Labour administration spends a huge amount of your money to deliver large scale development projects. We must realise that all this comes at high cost and high risk. The money this council brings in is your money, public money. This Council does not have the funds or reserves to pay for these high-risk projects, so it has borrowed and borrowed significantly, up to around £80million with over 50 years of payback

Outstanding Borrowing



Outstanding Debt



Forward

The environment in which the Council operates has changed significantly as a result of Covid-19 and therefore wellbeing will remain the focus of everything we do. As we respond to the pandemic, we will continually review our activity and work together to ensure that the Council is meeting the needs of communities.

It's about quality of life: doing all we can to provide suitable homes for people to live in, to work in partnership with local providers to deliver the best education, to ensure the skills and training for our children and young adults, to provide healthy and protected environments, and to secure a strong local economy that delivers the jobs and services we

need to prosper. It's about our lifestyle choices and opportunities to plan our future and to deliver services that keep people living healthily and independently for longer.

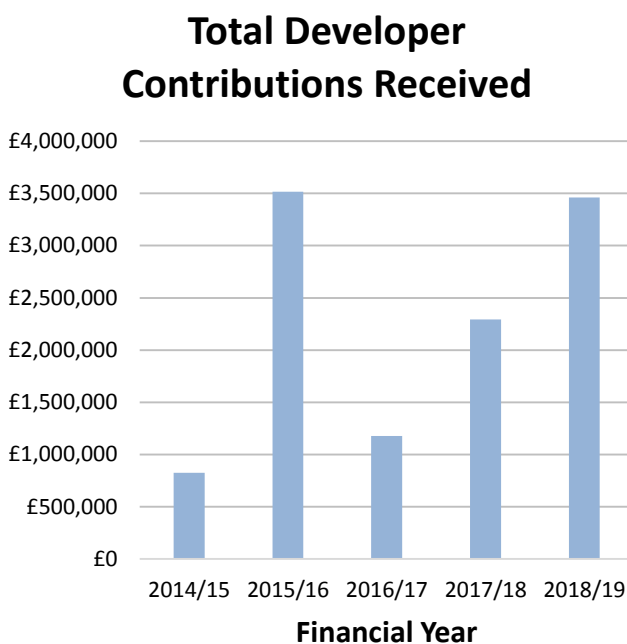
It's about this Council playing its part in how and where we live, work, and play in order to build a borough that works for everyone.

This Council must realise that it cannot simply try to compete with our larger neighbouring town centres, such as Preston, Wigan, and Manchester, as well as destination retail parks like Middlebrook. We need to embrace and support a new vision for Chorley town centre and the surrounding rural areas.

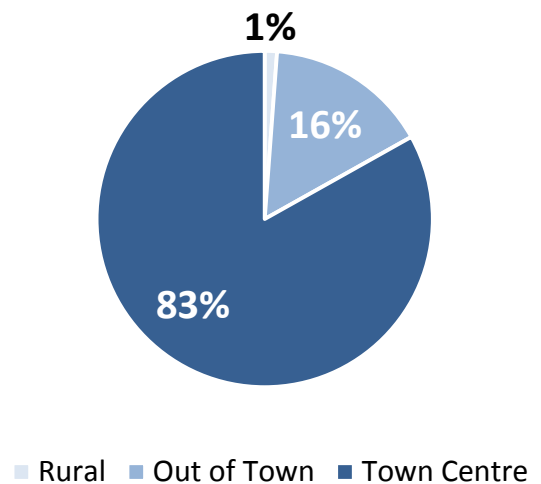
We are a "Traditional Destination Market Town" that should be supported, modernised, and enhanced with mixed use leisure, restaurant, café and bar, bespoke smaller retailers, and most importantly a better-quality town centre offer; a reduction of vacant retail units in hand with the introduction of higher density town centre residential living, providing homes for current and future generations.

Our focus will be fairly split between town centre and our beautiful rural areas. The current Labour administration has for the past 10 years ignored the needs of residents and businesses in our rural communities.

Millions of pounds of Developer Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy Charges collected from large and small-scale residential development outside the town centre, in areas such as Buckshaw Village, Euxton, Adlington, and Eccleston, and have been used to pay for infrastructure improvements and large projects to benefit those who live in close proximity to our town.



Developer Contribution Expenditure by Area between 2014-2019*



We will invest in our rural communities. We will provide clean and safe streets. We will provide activities for our young through to our elderly. Working in partnership, we will

**This includes S106 expenditure spent on projects (excluding play & open space and community centre maintenance).*

provide local healthcare to deliver much needed doctors and dentists to our entire borough and provide suitable transport and travel to access our local cities, towns and community centres. We will lobby to provide the right amount of Primary and Secondary School Places in our existing schools, in areas where these are needed, and support to grow local SME business to provide quality jobs throughout our entire borough.

We must be ambitious for all the communities we serve. We will deliver excellent services to the highest quality, whilst always ensuring the very best value. We want our residents to start well, to grow well, and to learn well and stay within the borough to lead long, happy, and healthy lives. We will support our businesses to thrive and prosper no matter where they are within our borough.

It means working to ensure our communities have suitable homes to live in, within a safe, healthy, and protected environment, supporting and enhancing a strong local economy that provides the skills, training, jobs, and services we need.

Our Five Themes

1. Environment

The high-quality environment of our borough plays a pivotal role in the wellbeing of our residents. Our focus remains on protecting the very special environment of the borough without ignoring growth. The number of homes we should be building to meet future demands is a huge challenge in a borough, which is predominantly rural and washed over with green open space. Yet we know there are many families and young people in particular who need a home of their own within their local area to provide more space to grow and prosper. Failure to provide this would put our economy, our communities, and our green open spaces at risk. With careful consideration and planning we will provide the right type of homes, for the right people in the areas where they wish to live and work. We will deliver on our targeted and specific housing commitments and not over deliver homes that are unsuitable for the young families and elderly who need them, whilst protecting our rural and historical environment and identity of our borough.

We cannot ignore that with a growing population comes the risk of affecting the most important aspect of life - our environment. Clean air is essential for life, health, the environment, and the economy. Poor air quality in Central Lancashire is contributing to hundreds of early, preventable deaths and making many existing health conditions worse. Poor air quality disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities, including children. It is positive that a Draft Air Quality Status report has now been produced for 2020 which we look forward to seeing fully implemented. In partnership with our Central Lancashire colleagues in Preston and South Ribble we will take the first steps to understand and to tackle the main causes of air pollution in our area, and in line with Governments ambitions we will commence work to generate our own Clean Air Strategy. We propose to set out a series of high-level pledges as to how we and others in the Central Lancashire can support the journey towards cleaner air. There are things that we

as the council will need to lead on and there are areas where we will need to support communities and businesses to make healthy and active choices. We will also need to provide clear and consistent messages, raising awareness of the impact of poor air quality and making it clear why action is needed. Improving air quality is a shared responsibility. We will work in partnership with organisations and institutions throughout our borough and across Central Lancashire.

As a council we will promote and champion green travel, including electric vehicles, increasing the number of electric vehicles in the council fleet wherever possible and putting in place the required infrastructure and charging points. Where possible, staff will be supported to reduce their travel by working in a more agile way using digital technology. We will also develop schemes to promote and incentivise greener choices when selecting a personal car. We will support and encourage all future initiatives and projects to reduce the overall carbon footprint.

2. Economy and Education

The economy and education of the borough will always be hugely influenced by our proximity to our neighbouring towns and cities and the challenges our high streets and businesses face. As the economy changes, new jobs will be created and skills required. We will support businesses and residents through the transition ahead, with our tailored support for businesses and focus on our towns and rural economies and new opportunities for training and growth. We have longed called for this Council to take seriously the prospect of providing the skills and training our school leavers require to see them through the next phase of their education. Currently, we do not have any further or higher education establishments in the borough, meaning our young must travel to neighbouring boroughs and towns to receive the training and skills they require for future employment. In partnership with existing providers and businesses, we will start the process to establish this provision to deliver the specialist skills and training our youngsters need to secure jobs within our existing businesses, but also to create the skilled workforce required to attract new investment and businesses

Of the **2824** homes built between 2014 and 2020 in our out of town areas...



only 21 were bungalows

Of the **887** homes built between 2014 and 2020 in the town centre ...



only 251 were flats*

**65 of which are extra care apartments at Primrose Gardens*

3. Community Safety

Community safety is a concern for all residents no matter where they live. We are fortunate to live in one of the safest places in Lancashire, but we understand we need to work better with our communities and partners to maintain this. Our outer town and rural areas are especially vulnerable following the recent redirection of our Police Community Support Officers. We promise to work closely with our rural policing teams in Lancashire to help prevent crime and the fear of crime and establish key officer roles to liaise regularly with rural policing teams to identify any hotspots.

We support the government's view that more officers are required to safeguard the most isolated and vulnerable residents in the borough. We will therefore work closely with our new Police and Crime Commissioner to push to deliver these in and around our rural areas. We will also work with our partners and communities to target youth crime and drug dealing, with a full programme of diversionary activities developed in collaboration with young residents and our partners

Of the **32,925** recorded incidents of crime between September 2018 and September 2020...

51% were in our rural and out of town areas

4. Housing

The availability of suitable and affordable housing is the single biggest issue facing the future of the borough. With the link between housing and health well known, the need to provide the right homes for the future of the Borough has never been greater. We cannot rely on large developers to deliver the housing we need. We need higher density town centre living, utilising many of the vacant retail and business premises for a vibrant mix of independent living, student, young worker, and young family accommodation to help boost our town centre economy.

We have a severe shortage of bungalows and smaller homes for the elderly and starter homes for young families in our rural areas. To achieve this, we aim to use our existing assets together with acquisition of new land assets to commence the building of our own housing stock, focusing on the right homes for the right people in the right areas. We look forward to seeing these priorities incorporated in the forthcoming Local Plan.

5. Health

We will deliver first class health care and prevention in our borough. This means residents will have access to the most appropriate support, when they need it, within their local area. We will distribute community infrastructure funding fairly and equally to improve health services and facilities across all areas of the borough. We will work with our partners in the NHS to retain a first-class hospital facility within our borough and have been pleased to see the reopening of A&E which we will continue to lobby for returning to a full 24 hour service.

We believe wellbeing is achieved by linking and improving our borough wide leisure facilities, housing, open spaces, planning, and environmental health work together. This is a challenge, but one we must tackle head on for the benefit of our residents. Prevention will be our focus. We will undertake a full review of our play and open space strategy across the entire borough, with an aim to deliver both outside exercise equipment for the elderly and multi-use games areas (MUGA) for the young in all rural areas that don't currently have access to these. We will establish a new Sports Club Development Grants Programme, to support growth in our existing and in new sports clubs throughout the wider borough.

For us to achieve the improvements set out under our five themes and to do so by building on our three core values of Excellence, Innovation and Value for Money, we need to increase our resilience, and look at long term and sustainable solutions with our residents alongside those changes we can make straight away. We will progress at pace our Shared Services agenda with our neighbouring Councils, growing our partnerships with our County Council colleagues, The Northern Power House, our businesses, communities, and other agencies. This will ultimately provide a better service to our customers, residents and businesses with a long-term view to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

We aim to be a "Seriously Different Council" by still providing all the high-quality services we should do at a price people can afford, whilst going beyond the traditional remit of a borough Council, enhancing wellbeing through everything we do.

Theme	Projects
1. Environment – a high quality environment that protects our residents and the identity of the borough	
Deliver a strategy to enable communities to improve their local areas	<p>This project will look at removing barriers to community participation and engagement so that where communities have the skills and capacity, they are able to make improvements to their local area and know where to look for support or assistance if they need it.</p> <p>The project will engage with local communities and review intelligence to understand where there may be opportunities to make things easier, for example by reviewing approval processes and eligibility criteria. The project will also consider the different types of assistance available, such as funding (including CIL and local grants programmes) and officer support, to ensure a coordinated approach that makes the best use of available resources.</p>
Increase the number of green or electric vehicles used by the council	<p>Investigate greener vehicle options ahead of renewing the council fleet in 2022 and put in place the required infrastructure to enable more electric or hybrid vehicles such as charging points.</p> <p>Develop schemes to encourage staff to reduce their carbon footprint by working in a more agile way, limiting travel, or choosing more sustainable options such as electric or hybrid vehicles.</p>
2. Economy and Education – supporting businesses with a focus on our towns and rural economics and identifying opportunities for training and growth	
Set up a skills hub in Chorley	<p>Chorley needs a skilled workforce for the future and currently there is no facility in Chorley to 'grow our own'. Young people have to commute out of the borough to other training providers, which is both unproductive for businesses and challenging for young people with limited access to transport.</p> <p>This project would work with partners, including existing training providers, colleges, universities, and local businesses, to establish a skills hub in Chorley. The skills hub will provide a facility to access physical or virtual training in specific sectors to meet future projections. It will ensure that young people have the skills they need to secure jobs with existing businesses and also create a skilled workforce to attract new investment and businesses to Chorley.</p>

<p>Provide tailored support for businesses across the borough</p>	<p>The business sector in Chorley is diverse, ranging from wholesale and retail through to emerging scientific and technical. The rural economy is important to Chorley in terms of employment, food production and supply, and supporting the visitor economy.</p> <p>This project will review the profile of businesses across the borough and engage with SME's to understand their needs in terms of support. It will then review the council's business support function, including grants provision and develop sectoral offers that respond to the different needs of SME's.</p>
<p>3. Community Safety – for the young and the elderly to benefit us all</p>	
<p>Work with young people to design diversionary projects and initiatives across the borough, with a focus in rural areas</p>	<p>This project will ensure that young people are able to access activities, services, and events that are important to them, initially with a focus in rural areas. A dedicated officer from within the Communities Team will work alongside partners, including the youth zone, to provide assistance, training, and tools to help young residents develop projects and initiatives.</p> <p>The aim of the project will be to empower young people to play an active role in developing diversionary activities. The outcome should be more engaged residents, improved community safety, and better health and wellbeing outcomes.</p>
<p>Develop a scheme to support vulnerable and elderly residents across the borough</p>	<p>A scheme will be developed to ensure that the council protects and safeguards the most elderly and vulnerable residents in the borough. Building on the model of social prescribing link workers, two new roles will be established to work proactively in target areas (such as areas with high elderly populations and sheltered housing schemes) to understand the needs of individuals.</p> <p>Work will then be undertaken to assess existing provision, identify gaps, and build support networks. We will build on the support offered through the Covid-19 Community Hubs. This may include, closer partnerships with rural policing teams, linking up wider services, or sources of support, such as pendant alarms or disabled facilities grants.</p>

4. Housing – the right homes for the right people in the right areas	
<p>Establish a project to investigate and promote Town Centre living to the young professional and student market</p>	<p>This project will undertake a real time assessment of vacant retail, commercial, office, and residential buildings within our town centre.</p> <p>We will look to procure these buildings with a view to converting empty space to residential and we will incentivise owners to undertake a change of use to encourage urban living. Working with our neighbouring universities we will promote Chorley as vibrant, designation student town.</p>
<p>Use existing assets to meet local housing need</p>	<p>This project will look at ways to accelerate housing delivery and take more control of the local market.</p> <p>It will further investigate local housing need including exploring options for new models of housing development and alternative build methods such as off site built, modular and low energy homes.</p> <p>We will use our existing council assets and work through the Local Plan to ensure the future housing meets the needs of our residents.</p>
5. Health – local accessibility for all	
<p>Establish a new Sports Club Development Grant Programme</p>	<p>Grass roots sports clubs offer a wide range of benefits for community cohesion and resident health and wellbeing, which will be even more important to support the Covid-19 recovery process.</p> <p>This project will provide grant support to enable clubs to undertake small scale works, such as repairs, pitch improvements, or enhancements to changing facilities. It will also facilitate match funding for sports clubs wishing to apply to regional or national funds, such as Sports England or Lottery for bigger developments.</p> <p>This type of support will empower communities, encourage the growth of grass roots clubs, and improve the quality of sports facilities across the borough.</p>
<p>Improve outdoor exercise facilities for all ages</p>	<p>Encouraging residents to be active is a key part of a preventative approach to health and wellbeing.</p>

	This project will undertake a full review of the councils play and open space strategy across the entire borough, with an aim to enhance existing provision with a range of outdoor exercise facilities for residents of all ages. This may include outdoor exercise equipment and the installation of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's) in rural areas where they don't currently exist.
Undertake a borough-wide assessment of GPs, Community Health Care Services and Dental Practises	<p>GPs, Community Health Care Services, and Local Dental Practises are essential infrastructure for a growing population.</p> <p>This project will immediately engage our officers to undertake a borough wide assessment of these essential infrastructure services with a view to the Council supporting a programme of community improvements where required.</p>

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

6. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

7. The proposals outlined in this paper will be brought into the Alternative Budget to be proposed to Full Council in February 2021.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

8. No comment.

CLLR JOHN WALKER
LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP

CLLR DEBRA PLATT
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP

There are no background papers to this report.

