

# Chorley Borough Council

## Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



**oneplace**

for an independent overview  
of local public services

## Chorley Borough Council

Overall, Chorley Borough Council performs excellently

Managing performance	4 out of 4
Use of resources	4 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	4 out of 4
Managing resources	4 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

## Summary

Chorley Borough Council performs excellently.

The Council is providing high quality services and delivering the priorities that local people have identified as important. Chorley is a clean and safe place and the Council has led an effective response to the recession. There are still challenges for the Council and its partners to deal with, such as housing and health, but good work within local communities is helping to address these issues effectively.

The Council scores 4 out of 4 for managing performance. Crime and teenage conception rates have fallen in recent years. Most people feel that Chorley is a safe place during the day but less so after dark. Surveys also show that Chorley is a place where people get on well together, take part in voluntary activities and work for the community. Chorley's streets are cleaner than in most other council areas. More household waste is being recycled.

Action taken by the Council has reduced the effects of the recession. Ninety seven new businesses have been established and 273 jobs created since 2008. Virtually all new businesses in Chorley are surviving for at least a year. Fewer shops are empty in the town centre and more people are now visiting the town. Unemployment is reducing and is below the Lancashire average. Average earnings are increasing and more 16 to 18 year olds have found education, employment or training positions in the past year.

The Council knows where further work is required. Action is being taken to provide more affordable homes. Admissions to hospital caused by alcohol harm, although reducing, are comparatively high. The Council is working with

other service providers to reduce the main causes of poor health in some communities. Overall 73 per cent of local people say that their health is good or very good but this figure is not as high as in most parts of England.

The Council scores 4 out of 4 for its use of resources. It uses its finances effectively to achieve priorities. Local people get value for money in the services they receive. The Council can show how it has moved resources towards supporting neighbourhoods, better community safety, more affordable homes and services for homeless people.

A clear vision sets out what the Council wants to achieve. It has an excellent understanding about the needs of Chorley's various communities. This information is used to design and deliver services and to work more effectively with other public service providers. Examples of these improvements can be seen in community safety and better support for vulnerable families.

A productive and skilled force led by effective councillors and strong managers is helping to ensure that the Council has the capability and capacity to continue to improve. The Council is recognised nationally for working with people and places. It is continuously reviewing the way it works in order to become even more efficient and ensure taxpayers get value for money.

## About Chorley Borough Council

Chorley is a borough in central Lancashire to the south of Preston. Motorway and rail connections make the area accessible from most parts of Lancashire and the wider sub-region. The population of Chorley is 104,100 of which 5.7 per cent are from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Chorley is the 188th most deprived local authority area out of 354 council areas. Unemployment is lower than the Lancashire, national and regional averages. But about an eighth of the borough's areas are amongst the most disadvantaged 20 per cent nationally.

Chorley Borough Council has 47 councillors representing 20 wards. The Conservative Party has control with 27 councillors. There are 15 Labour, 3 Liberal Democrat and 2 Independent councillors. The Council's priorities and strategic objectives are:

### Prosperity

- Strengthen Chorley's economic position in the Central Lancashire sub-region.

### People

- Improving equality of opportunity and life chances.
- Involving people in their communities.

### Place

- Develop local solutions to climate change.

- Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a great place to live.

#### Performance

- Ensure Chorley Council is a consistently top performing organisation.

## Organisational assessment

The Council has a clear vision for the borough which has been developed by working closely with local people and communities. It has an excellent understanding of their needs, what services they want and how they want to receive them. By delivering services, often in partnership with other providers, the Council is achieving excellent outcomes for each of its priorities. Services have shown continuous and sustained improvement in recent years. The Council's arrangements for monitoring its performance ensure that the majority of projects to achieve priorities are on track and targets are met.

We have considered how well the Council is performing against each of its priorities.

### Prosperity

The Council has taken effective action to reduce the impact of the recession. Projects support local businesses and residents, including redundancy support and an outreach worker in disadvantaged communities encouraging business start-ups. Ninety seven new businesses have been established and 273 jobs created since 2008. Virtually all new businesses in Chorley are surviving for at least a year. Fewer shops are empty in the town centre.

Unemployment in Chorley has consistently been below the Lancashire, national and regional averages. From April 2008 to April 2009 the unemployment rate increased from 1.7 to 3.4 per cent. Latest figures show that it had reduced to 3.1 per cent in July 2009. Average earnings have continued to increase.

Action plans are in place to increase the vitality of the local economy. These include further improvements to the market and the choice and quality of shops in the town centre which has been recognised by a North West Markets Town award. Visitors have increased by 12 per cent in the last year.

### People

The Council is improving equal opportunities and life chances for local people. It is excellent at engaging with local people and involving them in their communities. The Council is nationally recognised for its work in supporting and promoting communities where people get along.

Life chances for young people and the quality of life for older people are improving. The Council and other public services are reducing differences in health amongst Chorley people, particularly around alcohol and teenage conceptions. In the last two years teenage conceptions have fallen by 21 per cent, with a 70 per cent increase in the number of young people accessing

sexual health services and education. Action is being taken to reduce the high number of alcohol related hospital admissions in Chorley. Although the number is reducing, it is high compared with other parts of Lancashire. Overall 73 per cent of local say that their healthy is good or very good but this figure is not as high as in most parts of England.

More people are taking part in sports and leisure activities. Participation rates have increased amongst older people, people with a disability, ethnic minority communities and young people from Chorley's most disadvantaged areas. Vulnerable families receive good support from the Council and other public services. This support is resulting in increased school attendance, less domestic violence and better levels of family health.

Across Chorley, more 16 to 18 year olds were in education, employment or training in January 2009 than in 2008. The proportion of working age people in Chorley's most disadvantaged areas who claim benefits has reduced and is already better than the Lancashire target for 2011.

Twenty six groups and individuals have received rewards in recognition of their efforts to improve life in Chorley. The Chorley Smile campaign involves people in their community and highlights how they can play their part. The Council works with them to promote active, responsible citizenship and as a result is encouraging more and more residents to take pride in their area.

More than eight in ten Chorley residents believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together. A similar number think that people treat each other with respect and consideration. Almost a third, which is comparatively high, believe that they can influence decisions in their locality. Examples of this include dedicating additional resources to activities for young people, introducing a third wheelie bin for recycling and the design of the refurbished All Seasons leisure centre.

The Council has allowed local people to take a more direct role in running services, such as community centres. These arrangements have been successful in improving facilities, increasing usage and giving access to training opportunities and IT classes. The Council has encouraged and increased volunteering across age groups, particularly in areas with historically low levels of engagement and voluntary activity.

## Place

More people are satisfied with Chorley as a place to live than in 2006. The level of satisfaction is one of the highest across Lancashire. Chorley's streets are comparatively cleaner than in most other areas. The Council has also received national recognition for improving the quality of the local environment and the image of the borough. Weeks of action engage residents in community clean-up days. An extra wheelie bin is reducing spillages and keeping streets cleaner after refuse collections. Fewer people now consider that abandoned cars, litter, graffiti and vandalism are problems.

Neighbourhood working provides new ways of delivering services that are most appropriate for their local areas. Local people and organisations such as the Council and the Police work together to plan services such as street cleaning, grass cutting, housing and community safety. This strong focus on

neighbourhood communities gives local people power to influence decisions and target resources on issues that matter most to them.

The Council and its partners have had a positive impact in reducing the level of crime in Chorley. Weeks of action involve up to 30 agencies who work together to tackle specific issues in an area. By combining intelligence and concentrating efforts on problem areas, local people are assured that their concerns are being addressed. Overall crime has reduced by 28 per cent since 2005. Burglary fell by 26 per cent and theft and anti-social behaviour fell by 16 per cent in 2008/09. The only increase was for serious violent crime, up by eight per cent. Nine out of ten of residents feel safe during the day and almost six in ten at night.

Positive action is being taken to increase the delivery of affordable housing. The Council has, for example, invested £700,000 in a purchase and repair scheme that has attracted a similar level of investment from a housing association. It is aiming to deliver 103 homes over the next two years. However, only 39 homes were delivered in 2008/09 compared with the target of 50. Improvements to the homelessness service, now provided directly by the Council, have resulted in fewer households being placed in temporary accommodation. Further plans include facilities for families and for people with disabilities in the Council's hostel. A wider range of services and support are also being introduced such as life skills and job advice.

The Council is developing local solutions to address the effects of climate change. Strict planning controls are intended to reduce carbon emissions and ensure developments are able to withstand climate change. Projects such as One World Living provide advice and environmental audits for businesses. Effective action is being taken to reduce the Council's own carbon footprint when it buys goods and services. An invest to save programme using combined heat and power at the All Seasons Leisure Centre is forecast save £40,000 and reduce carbon emissions by 99 tonnes each year.

A new refuse and recycling contract, food waste collections and town centre recycling litter bins have further reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill for disposal. Fifty two per cent of household waste is now being sent for recycling, composting or re-use, compared with 47 per cent in 2007/08.

## Performance

The Council is a consistently top performing organisation. It plans projects and actions well to ensure that they reflect and meet the needs of the Chorley area and its people. The Council has achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in recognition of its work to support vulnerable people and reduce levels of inequality. The number of council employees from ethnic minority communities has increased. The Council works well with people in more disadvantaged and rural areas to ensure that they know what help is available to improve their quality of their life.

External awards also recognise the quality of council services and work to improve the health and well-being of employees. Fifty one per cent of local people are satisfied with how the Council runs things which compares very well with other councils. Over 97 per cent of people contacting the Council feel that they receive an excellent service. The Council continually improves

value for money in its services. It has reviewed and changed services to ensure they are delivered efficiently. Despite a reduction of 100 staff in recent years, the Council has made cost savings, kept council tax increases below inflation and improved performance.

The Council has the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver further improvements. Political and managerial leadership are strong. Both councillors and officers demonstrate excellent leadership and place the needs of local people at the heart of what they are seeking to achieve. In particular, the Council has introduced a wide range of activities to support local businesses and residents during the economic downturn and to promote investment in the borough.

The capability of councillors and officers is also strong. They are well supported by development programmes and learning opportunities, reflected by high levels of staff satisfaction. Skills gaps and capacity have been addressed through, for example, shared financial and assurance services and a community safety partnership with a neighbouring council. These arrangements have generated efficiency savings and given access to a wider range of expertise.

Capacity is increased by effective partnership working with other public services, community and voluntary groups. Partners work effectively together to make good use of their combined resources. Examples of this joint approach include improved community safety, reduced differences in levels of health and more affordable homes. The Council works with other Lancashire councils to secure cost savings through the joint procurement of goods and services.

Action to address high levels of sickness absences has had a significant impact. The approach has reduced absences from an average of 10.3 to 7.23 days per employee.

Strong financial and performance management arrangements are in place to monitor progress against the Council's budget, priorities, key projects and actions. The arrangements link with corporate planning and a medium term financial strategy and ensure that the Council's resources are used effectively to improve services. In particular, investment in specific projects, for example, alcohol harm reduction, has attracted significant further investment from partners. Effective arrangements for producing accurate and reliable data mean that decision making is well informed.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

Alternative formats - If you require a copy of PDF documents in this site in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call: 0844 798 7070

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ  
Telephone: 0844 798 1212  
Fax: 0844 798 2945  
Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)



for an independent overview  
of local public services