

Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Chief Executive (Introduced by the Leader)	Council	20/07/2021

## Chorley Council Annual Report 2020/21

### Purpose of report

- To provide a summary of the Council's achievements during 2020/21 as well as highlighting both the challenges and opportunities facing the Council in 2021/22 and beyond.

### Recommendation(s)

- That the report be noted.

### Executive summary of report

- Overall performance against the Corporate Strategy in 2021/20 was very good, delivering significant progress against the council's key priorities:
  - 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
- Despite a challenging and uncertain period, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the council has continued to deliver against the corporate strategy, whilst providing support to local residents and businesses affected by the pandemic. This report outlines those key achievements, the challenges and opportunities.
- Looking ahead, the council will need to balance anticipated increased demand for services as communities emerge from Covid-19 and recovery begins, against the potential for retraction in public spending.
- Appendix A of the annual report provides the Trade Union Facilities time for 2020/21 as required by regulation from 2017. It shows the amount and cost of trade union facility time within the council over the last 12 months.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	<b>No</b>
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<b>Key Decision?</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	<b>No</b>
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**Reasons for recommendation(s)  
(If the recommendations are accepted)**

7. The Annual Report forms part of the council's performance management framework and supports the council in reflecting on its performance over the previous 12 months.

**Alternative options considered and rejected**

8. N/A

**Corporate priorities**

9. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

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

**Background**

10. The annual report is a key mechanism for presenting information about the Council's performance to residents, partners and key stakeholders. The report provides information regarding the key activities which have been delivered over the past 12 months to meet our vision and corporate priorities.

**Summary of the report**

11. The Chorley Council Annual Report is attached to this paper as an appendix. The key headlines from the report include:

**Covid-19 Community Response in 2020/21**

12. 'Chorley Together' was launched in 2020 as a direct response to Covid-19, to support the most vulnerable individuals and families within the borough. The work the council has undertaken in recent years through its community resilience framework provided a strong foundation for our response to the pandemic. The response was made possible through a collaborative effort between council services and employees as well as working with key service providers and community-based organisations; including Chorley Buddies, Pauline's Angels, Inspire Youth Zone and NHS responders.
13. Overall, 973 households have been supported during 2020/21 through the 'Chorley Together Programme' with advice, support and assessment around financial support, food parcels and assisted shopping.
14. Support to businesses has also been a critical part of the response, implementing national grant programmes at pace. The teams have been able to process £40 million worth of grants to business across Chorley, amounting to 7,779 payments. This has provided a vital lifeline whilst Covid-19 restrictions were and, in some cases, remain in force.

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

15. We have continued to support residents to take an active part in their local communities, such as through Small Community Grants programme, which has assisted 17 voluntary, community, and faith sector groups from across the borough to continue to deliver community based services. This has included towards vital safety equipment, which has ensured that groups such as Mawdesley Bowling Club, Chorley Panthers RLFC, and 1st Wheelton Brownies can operate in a Covid-19 secure way.
16. We commenced essential renovation works at Astley Hall, which will enhance access to the facility and secure it as a valuable community asset by maintaining the structural integrity and safety of the building. This will ensure that the hall remains a community focal point that residents can take pride in, with associated benefits to tourism.
17. We have been delivering our Activity Buddies programme, which has been addressing social isolation in Chorley through a buddy system that seeks to improve vulnerable people's confidence and involve them in their community through one-to-one support. In addition to this, we have delivered initiatives to tackle food poverty and holiday hunger. This includes through granting funding to community groups, which have provided families with support, as well as distributing supermarket vouchers to families in need. This has ensured that all residents have access to food and can equally live healthy lives.
18. We launched our new webpage after an extensive development process, which involved user testing to ensure that it was designed according to customers' needs. The website has been built with accessibility in mind and features new accessibility tools. This project has ensured that our online services are easy to use, accessible, and efficient, enhancing the customer experience.

## **Clean, safe and healthy communities**

19. We have continued to contribute to clean, safe and healthy communities with the delivery of improvements to 19 play and open spaces across the borough. These improvements have ranged from new play equipment at the Broom Close Play Area to the construction of a state of the art sports pavilion at the Westway Sports Campus. This will ensure that all residents have access to fit-for-purpose outdoor facilities and green spaces, with associated benefits to health and wellbeing.
20. We sought to address health inequality with our Winter Warmth Programme and our Affordable Warmth Grant, which have supported those effected by fuel poverty. This has involved the distribution of brochures to provide essential advice and guidance on how to keep warm and healthy during the winter months. Furthermore, we have also been publishing advice for private tenants at risk of homelessness via a new webpage to increase awareness of tenant rights. This is part of our proactive approach to prevent homelessness and provide residents with safe and secure homes.
21. We commenced the project to transform Tatton Recreation Ground and the former bus depot site off Eaves Lane, which will provide vital facilities for residents and improve health provision and open spaces when completed. The ambitious development has made good progress over 2020/21, which has included the development of designs and approval of planning permission as well as initial ground works ahead of construction in 2021/22.

## **A strong local economy**

22. We successfully delivered essential support to businesses as part of the Covid-19 community response to ensure that the business sector remains strong. This has involved the hosting of 53 webinars for sectors in distress on subjects such as digital marketing strategies as well as advice on cashflow, which were attended by 643 individuals. Moreover, we have administered over £40 million in Covid-19 support grants, which amounted to 7,779 payments, as well as supported the government KickStart scheme, proving funding and referring young people at risk of long term unemployment to businesses to create new job places.
23. We have continued to support the creation of jobs through schemes such as the Business Grant programme as well as our Digital Creative Scheme. These provide start-ups, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses with funding in order to help expansion and create new high quality job opportunities. As part of this, we supported the creation of 366 projected jobs.
24. We started improvements to the historic covered markets, which has included the redesign of the market entrance, instillation of new signage, and redecoration of the exterior of the building. These works will ensure that the facility continues to be a vibrant commercial focal point to the town and support the needs of local businesses that operate in the building.

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

25. We progressed our ambition to improve our environmental performance, with the delivery of elements of the Green Agenda project. This includes the planting of over 24,000 trees throughout the borough as part of our commitment to plant a tree for every resident by 2025, supporting us to operate more sustainably. We also conducted initial mapping of our carbon footprint, which will inform our green actions going forward.
26. We delivered phase one of shared services between ourselves and South Ribble Borough Council, which will reduce the costs of operating services across both authorities and strengthen resilience whilst creating more development opportunities for staff. The first phase has involved the shared of Legal, Democratic Services and Electoral Services, Transformation and Partnerships, as well as Communications and Visitor Economy. This forms part of our aim to continuously strive to improve as a service provider.
27. We continued to build on the multi-agency group (PIVOT), which managed 138 cases to provide joined up support for vulnerable individuals, to reduce duplication across public services, and to improve wellbeing for residents. We have also continued to fund and protect bus routes across the borough to support services that were at risk of withdrawal. This has enabled our residents to access vital services, such as the hospital and town centre, to ensure we retain cohesive communities in and around our rural and urban areas.

## **Council spending**

28. The council has invested in improvements right across the borough that have helped deliver better long-term outcomes for residents in 2020/21. This has included £800k on home adaptations to enable residents to live independently for longer, £500k invested in Leisure Centres to enhance the facilities, £280k spent on our play and open spaces across the borough, and £260k spent on improvements around the town centre to ensure it remains a vibrant commercial space.

## **Future challenges in 2021/22**

29. Looking ahead to 2021/22, we have a number of challenges that we face as a local authority. This includes managing the impact of potential cuts to public service funding and increasing

demand for services in addition to the enormous responsibility we have in spearheading the Covid-19 recovery at the local level. We have a clear plan to sustain support for the most vulnerable residents, get council services back on track, protect local businesses, as well as deliver the projects and improvements that matter most to our residents and supporting employability.

30. As part of our strategy , we will continue to invest in our communities to support a strong post-pandemic recovery. This includes in the progression and delivery of key development projects, such as at Alker Lane, Tatton, and Bengal Street, which will provide essential facilities both for residents as well as businesses, building local assets. We will also continue with our ambition to deliver sustainable, efficient, and value for money services through delivery of phase two of shared services, finding new ways to deliver services through our public service reform partnership, and progression of our Green Agenda. This will ensure that we continue to foster thriving communities and deliver high quality services for our residents.

**Implications of report**

31. 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	<b>X</b>	Policy and Communications	

Chris Sinnott  
Deputy Chief Executive

Report Author	Ext	Date
Jon-James Martin	***	30/06/2021