



Chorley Council Annual Report

2012/13



Introduction - Making it happen in Chorley

Over the past 12 months I feel we have made real progress against key priorities for the people of Chorley and I'm pleased that we have been able to listen to residents and invest in making things happen despite government spending cuts. We have been successful in bringing more visitors to the town centre, delivering affordable homes, improving grot spots and getting more people involved in their community.

However, the economic conditions continue to present big challenges for Chorley and we are under no illusion that times are tough for everyone in all aspects of life. Our priority is to grow our local economy and create more job opportunities whilst improving the quality of Chorley as a place to live for all residents of the borough.

This report sets out some of the improvements that we have made and also more importantly, considers what is still to be done. We are ambitious in our commitment to making Chorley a great place and we don't just want to meet the needs of residents but exceed them.

I'm confident that by working together we can continue 'Making It Happen'.

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Leader of Chorley Council



Last year we asked people in Chorley what was important to them and set challenging targets to ensure that we delivered over and above on the things that matter.

Performance in many areas has been good and we have exceeded targets in relation to affordable housing, town centre and clean streets. There is still a lot to be done and we will continue to drive forward and do even more in 2013/14.

**Councillor Peter Wilson, Deputy Executive Leader, Executive Member
(Resources, Policy and Performance)**



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

What will success look like?

- Residents who take pride in where they live and their achievements
- All residents are able to take an active part in their community
- Easy access to high quality public services

Neighbourhood working – Residents and local groups are working together with the council to improve the environment and neighbourhood in which they live. Across the eight neighbourhood areas, meetings have been held between key stakeholders to identify three priorities for each area. Delivery has started on 24 key projects including environmental improvements, business support and community projects.

Working Together With Families – As part of the Lancashire Improving Futures programme, partners are joining forces to support the most vulnerable families in Chorley. The three year programme will work with around 230 families to address complex needs related to health, crime and education to improve future outcomes.

Community development –The Chorley Time Credits programme uses a system of time banking to get residents engaged and active in their communities. Members of the scheme give their time to support local services and organisations and in exchange ‘earn’ credits that can be used to access local services such as leisure centres, theatres and community events.

Support for third sector – Maintaining its commitment to the third sector, the council awarded £15,000 to the VCFS Network to develop further infrastructure and support for third sector organisations in Chorley and strengthen provision for volunteering including links into the Lancashire County Council volunteering programme. The council also awarded approximately £180,000 of core funding grants to enable local voluntary, community and faith sector groups to deliver vital services and projects in the community.

45 ORGANISATIONS ARE NOW EARNING AND SPENDING TIME CREDITS

400 MEMBERS ARE SIGNED UP TO TIME CREDITS IN CHORLEY

4000 HOURS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

£180,000 

CORE FUNDING WAS AWARDED TO VCFS GROUPS IN CHORLEY



A strong local economy

What will success look like?

- A vibrant town centre and villages
- A strong and expanding business sector
- Access to high quality employment and education opportunities

'This was my first meeting in Chorley. I came away very energised and keen. Thank you'

Delegate, Choose Chorley

'I found this morning really useful, thank you! I feel I can now have a much more focused and organised approach to how I use social media'

Delegate, Boost Your Business

Growing the local economy

In 2012/13:

- **88** new businesses were established
- **240** new starts advised
- **220** existing businesses advised
- **29** of the above intensively assisted
- **54** jobs created through targeted interventions

Support for businesses

Chorley continues to be a great place for business. In 2012/13 the council committed to supporting new and existing businesses with the appointment of two new business advisors. A number of resources including newsletters, business seminars and workshops have also been developed to give businesses in Chorley an opportunity to meet, network and learn including 2 Choose Chorley Networks and 4 Boost Your Business workshops attracting around 200 attendees. In addition, grants totalling around £141,000 have been awarded to support businesses in Chorley.

£51,384

STARTING IN BUSINESS GRANTS

£33,363

CLIMATE CHANGE GRANTS

£56,085

TOWN CENTRE AND LOCAL SERVICE CENTRE GRANTS
INCLUDING SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT



Improving the town centre

More has been done to encourage people to visit Chorley and shop in the town centre with key attractions and events including the Big Wheel which saw 12,424 have a go over Christmas 2012, and new pricing options for car parking in the town centre.

Figures from March 2013 show that Chorley's high street is bucking the national trend with footfall figures in the main shopping centre up by nearly 16 per cent compared to national average figures, which are down by just over two per cent. Overall visits to the town centre have increased by 4% to 34,692 compared to the same time last year however this is still below the target of 37,500, a more challenging aspiration for 2013/14.

The current parking arrangements have been extended for a further 6 months and work to revitalise Market Street has progressed following the clean-up of the old McDonalds site and trial re-opening of Market Street due later in 2013.

Vacant Ground Floor Units

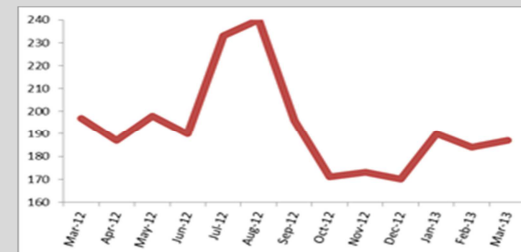


Independent Units



Young people not in employment education or training (NEET)

Over the last twelve months the number of NEET's has reduced by 5.1% (from 197 to 187) through working more closely with our partners and creating additional apprenticeship places.



However young people aged 18-24 continue to make up the largest proportion of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Chorley.

A project with Runshaw College is now up and running which will provide a further £45,000 over two years to support getting more young people into work.



Clean safe and healthy communities

Clean streets

Clean streets and open spaces are important to help people to take pride in their local environment and make Chorley communities more attractive to residents and visitors. Levels of street cleanliness remain high although there are still 'grot spot' areas in some wards and this year we have put in place additional dedicated resources to improve these spaces.



What will success look like?

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

Award winning parks and open spaces

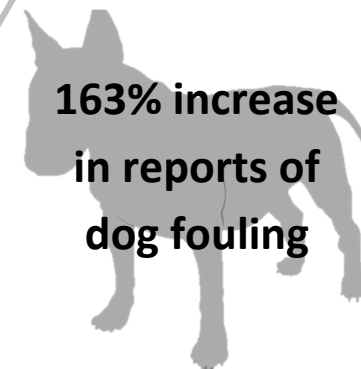
Yarrow Valley Country Park, Withnell Local Nature Reserve and Tatton Recreation Ground have once again been awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award – and for the first time Astley Park is also now eligible to fly the Flag.

The national award, which recognises and celebrates high quality green spaces, is a sign to visitors that the park is well-maintained and well-managed, with excellent facilities.

Don't Be a Dirty Dog

The Don't Be a Dirty Dog campaign encourages responsible dog ownership and promotes the action that can be taken by the council to address dog fouling. There has been a 163% increase in reported dog fouling since the beginning of the campaign. There have also been approximately 30 fixed penalty notices handed out for dog fouling in the last six months. The Don't Be a Dirty Dog campaign will continue to take action against irresponsible dog owners over the coming year.

163% increase in reports of dog fouling





Affordable housing

In 2012/13 183 affordable homes were delivered in Chorley, an increase of 8% compared to 2011/12.



Long term empty properties

Good progress is being made in tackling the number of empty properties. At the end of March 2013 the figure was 265 and is currently 255 against a target of 240

Community safety

- In 2012/13 overall crime increased in Chorley by 0.9% since last year, which equates to 49 crimes.
- In 2012/13 anti-social behaviour in Chorley is down by 6% when compared with 2011/12.
- Domestic abuse offending continues to record increases. Work has been taking place in 2012/13 to raise awareness of domestic abuse. By providing victims with the confidence to report abuse, the detection rate is positive at 73% compared to a target of 70%.

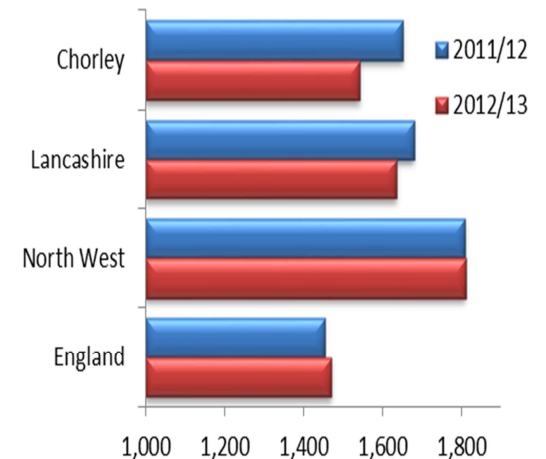
Health and wellbeing

The alcohol intervention programme delivered by the Chorley Partnership in 2010/11 sought to improve alcohol services and deliver targeted activity.

Latest figures for quarter three (October to December) 2012/13 show that the rate of alcohol related admissions in Chorley was 499 per 100,000 population, and compared with the same period in 2010/11 is a decrease of 10%.

Chorley's rate of alcohol related admissions for 2012/13 is lower than both the Lancashire and the North West average with rates per 100,000 of 1,635 and 1,810 respectively. This equates to 5.7% lower than the county average and 14.8% lower than the regional average.

Although alcohol related admissions are 4.9% higher than the national average, this is a huge improvement compared with 13.6% in 2011/12.



Source: North West Public Health Observatory



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

What will success look like?

- A council that consults and engages with residents
- An ambitious council that continually strives to improve

Customer satisfaction

In May 2013, 66.7% of residents were satisfied with the service they received from the council and of those 53.4% were very satisfied. The recent resident satisfaction survey shows a big increase in satisfaction with the way the council runs things from 51% in 2008 to 72% at May 2013. Residents also feel that they are getting better value for money.

This year the council set tough new targets for satisfaction and also started to measure dissatisfaction so that we can understand where residents think we need to improve and take action to make things better. We will continue to work hard to improve our services by making sure that we are responding to customers quickly and providing updates.

84% of people are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

73% of people are satisfied with the way the council runs things

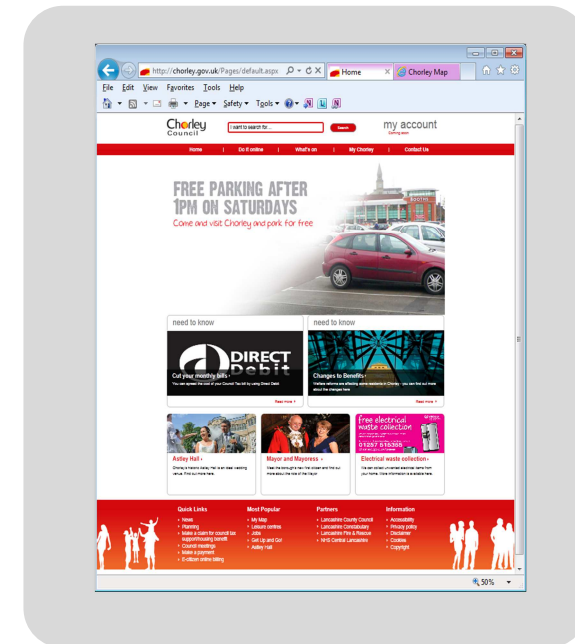
91% of the population feel safe during the day

(Resident satisfaction survey, May 2013)

Improving access to services

In 2012 the council launched a new look website to improve the quality of information available to residents online and make it easier to access services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The new website provides a platform to make even more services available at a click of a button including mapping and reporting with future features to include user accounts so that customers can make requests for service and track the progress online.

Also in 2012 we opened the doors of the Town Hall for people to come and see what the Council does for them with the opportunity to take part in consultations and make suggestions for improvement.

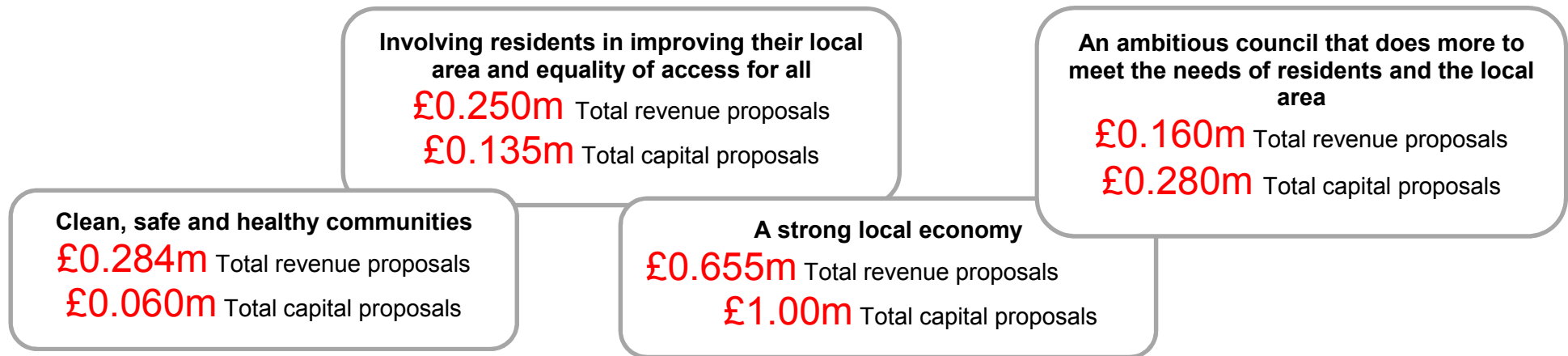




Council spending

In 2012/13 Chorley Council made the decision to freeze Council Tax despite difficult financial conditions. At the same time the council committed to invest £2.8 million in priorities identified by local people to help create jobs, support the local economy, make more of local assets such as landmark sites and award winning parks, as well as helping young people.

The £2.8 million investment will go towards the council's four main priority areas:



The authority is faced with almost £1.3 million in grant reduction over the next two years but savings made by reducing management costs and providing services more efficiently means that the council is in a position where it can make investment towards improving outcomes for residents. The budget will also see fees and charges frozen and £450,000 of debt paid off to reduce repayment charges.



Making It Happen in 2013/14 – The Challenges

Residents of Chorley continue to experience the effects of difficult economic conditions with increasing levels of debt and deprivation. The gap between our most affluent and deprived areas is growing and future changes to the welfare system as a result of welfare reforms will put even more pressure on some of the boroughs most vulnerable families. We are challenged with reducing welfare dependency whilst protecting the vulnerable and ensuring better outcomes in terms of health, education and housing.

The emphasis must be on creating jobs by attracting investment into Chorley to drive growth in our local economy including improvements to the town centre and open spaces. The council and its partners are tasked with supporting people into work wherever possible with a particular focus on young people and their vital future contribution to the borough.

We must also continue to improve Chorley as a place to live by making our local neighbourhoods attractive, healthy spaces where residents play an active part in their community encouraging and promoting a sense of local pride.

Debt

- In 2012/13, 5308 people received advice from the CAB, of which 26% were debt related and 24% related to Welfare Benefits
- In terms of debt, in 2012/13 CAB rescheduled an average of £15,118 of debt per Chorley client/family.
- There is an increase in debt clients returning for further help – around 10%.
- The number of people accessing pay day loans continues to increase, with average debt levels between £1200 and £2000.

Employment

- 20.3% of people in Chorley aged 16-64 are economically inactive, which has increased from 18.8% in Sept 2012.
- The unemployment rate of those economically active is at 5.9% of Chorley's working age population - this is the highest it has been since March 2010.
- Average weekly pay is £495 which is lower than the Great Britain average of £508.
- Figures for both employment and Job Seekers Allowance claimants are better than the regional and national average.

Deprivation

- For Chorley, the last indices of deprivation, released in 2011 indicated that the number of areas that could be classified as being deprived overall and in terms of employment and income has increased.
- Areas that had been deprived in 2007 had become deprived at an even greater rate than other areas.
- There are now ten areas ranked in the bottom 20% nationally and all of these have dropped overall in the rankings.



How will we continue making it happen?

A number of key initiatives have been put in place supported by budget investment such as:

- ✓ **Neighbourhood working** which will see more engagement with residents and the delivery of key activity to achieve neighbourhood priorities.
- ✓ **Increasing volunteering and the time credits programme** to get residents involved and taking an active role in their communities as well as gaining vital skills and experience for work.
- ✓ **Credit Union** – Chorley’s credit union will launch from a high street location in 2013, providing an accessible source of financial services and products.
- ✓ **More structured partnership working** with a focus on more collaboration and working together to add value.
- ✓ **Economic development** – the inward investment strategy will encourage new business into Chorley increasing jobs along with key activity in the town centre including comprehensive business support and advice packages to promote local economic growth
- ✓ **Working Together With Families** a highly targeted programme to improve life outcomes for the boroughs most vulnerable families will progress into its second year.
- ✓ **Improving the way we operate as an organisation** – the Council has committed to improving engagement with residents and increasing transparency.
- ✓ **Campaigns and events including civic pride** will take opportunities to communicate with residents, visitors and businesses in different ways.