

**DIRECTION OF TRAVEL
SELF-ASSESSMENT
OCTOBER 2006**



SELF ASSESSMENT - DIRECTION OF TRAVEL 2006

CONTENTS

- The Council's Track Record in improving outcomes
Key Service Improvements
- Progress in delivering wider Community Outcomes
- Improvements regarding Corporate Governance
- Improvements in access to and the quality of services for Hard to Reach Groups
- Progress made in developing robust plans for improvement and delivery against them
- Document Reference List

SETTING THE SCENE

During the last 12 months Chorley has continued to deliver significant improvements and transform the way in which it delivers services to and engages with its communities.

Key Successes this year include

- Achieving the **Charter Mark** for Customer Services
- Winning the North West in Bloom **Environmental Award** with a score of 19.5 out of 20
- Delivering the **highest recycling rates** in Lancashire
- Chorley being recognised as having the **Cleanest Streets** in Lancashire
- Over, **8,000 children** participating in the Get up and Go programme
- Securing the **"yes"** vote from tenants in favour of transferring housing stock to Chorley Community Homes
- Reduction in **Crime levels by 13%**

Other areas of focus for us over the last 12 months, and going forward over the next three years, include developing the Strategic Regional Employment Site, seeking ways to improve service delivery and value for money by exploring outsourcing and partnering opportunities, the integration of all aspects of streetscene and environmental activity, developing even more effective mechanisms for engagement with local people and other stakeholders in the Borough, and embedding our approach to 'joined up service delivery' starting with the piloting this year of area forums in three areas of the Borough.

A key contextual change during the last year has been the change in leadership at both a political and senior management level. Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive in January 2006, political control changed in May this year with the Conservative Group forming the new Executive Cabinet. In addition, a new senior management structure has been implemented which, as well as generating £110,000 of savings per year (14.5% of the current senior management salary budget), the revised team will be key in building upon Chorley's strengths and taking forward the improvement agenda.

The Council recognises that there are a number of significant challenges and opportunities facing us over the next three years. As a consequence, we have developed a new Corporate Strategy that sets the key strategic focus for the authority and acts as the driver for all that we have committed to achieving over the next three years. Furthermore, we are currently re-structuring the Chorley Strategic Partnership; in order to strengthen our approach and take forward excellent partnership working that delivers tangible outcomes for our communities.

We envisage that 2006/07 will be another successful year for Chorley in achieving notable improvements in service delivery and the quality of life for local people.



Donna Hall
Chief Executive



Councillor P Goldsworthy
Leader of the Council



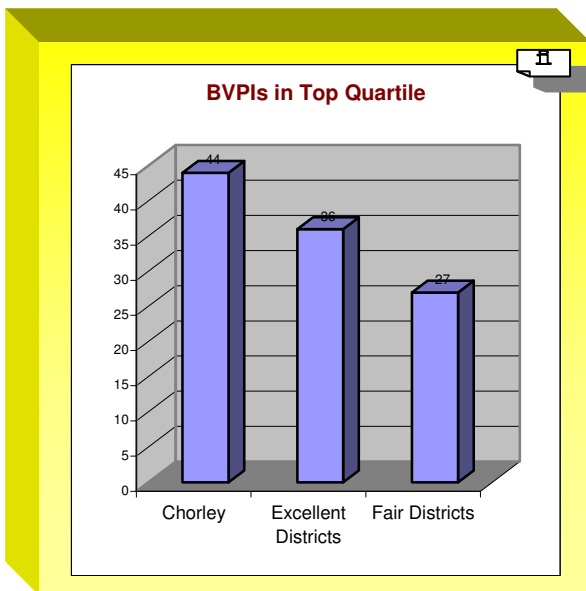
Councillor P Case
Deputy Leader and
Executive Member for Policy and
Performance

1. The Council's Track Record in improving outcomes Key Service Improvements

BVPI Performance

The Council continues to deliver excellent services for its customers across the scope of its activity and is continually achieving improved outcomes. The Audit Commission PI tool showed that in 2004/05, 60% of the Council's basket of CPA performance indicators showed improving performance from the 2002/03 baseline.

With 44% of performance indicators in the top quartile, Chorley's performance massively exceeds that of the majority of fair Districts (with an average of 27% in the top quartile), and that of most excellent Districts (averaging 36%). In terms of service performance Chorley is clearly performing well above the level of fair, the current CPA categorisation held by the authority.



This drive for continuous improvement is also reflected in the results for 2005/06 with 64% of comparable CPA Performance indicators showing improving or consistent performance between 2004/05 and 2005/06 and 71% of all BVPIs achieving or exceeding target in 2005/06.

Key Message

71% of Performance Indicators met or exceeded target in 2005/06

Customer Focus

This sustained drive for excellence in service performance has been delivered through a number of initiatives recognised regionally and

nationally by partners and stakeholders as excellent and innovative.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Our innovative approach to Customer Service and Partnership working has resulted in:

- Over £300,000 of savings over seven years (Average of £43,000 per annum)
- An average of 13,700 calls handled per month
- 97% of Customers being satisfied or very satisfied with how we dealt with their enquiry in the One Stop Shop
- Chorley being ranked second out of eighteen authorities for Customer Satisfaction

Category	Chorley (%)	Average (%)
emails	80%	65%
website	80%	80%
visits	85%	80%
letters	80%	55%
overall	85%	75%

In August 2005 the Council achieved the highest possible level of recognition of its excellence in Customer Service with the Audit Commission recognising us as having a three star approach to Customer Access and Focus with excellent prospects for improvement, realised through **“Strong and visionary leadership in customer services, ensuring that the needs of customers and service users are at the heart of planning service and delivery”**.

This recognition of exceptionally high levels of performance is echoed by customers **“The service at the One Stop Shop is always exemplary. My wife is disabled and we regularly come in to speak to members of the customer service team. They even remember my name and everything about our case so we don't have to keep repeating ourselves.”**

The delivery of the Shared Services Contact Centre has enabled the Council to offer co-located

Services, for example Lancashire County Council community services and the Now Card (concessionary travel) can be accessed through the One Stop Shop as part of our continued commitment to facilitate constructive working arrangements across local authority boundaries. Furthermore, the Council works in partnership with agencies such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, Patient Liaison Advice Service (PALS) and the Department of Work and Pensions to provide surgeries in the One Stop Shop 260 surgeries have taken place over the last 12 months.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

Chorley has been awarded the prestigious Charter Mark for Customer Services, when visiting the authority assessors recognised that

- Staff are very customer focussed
- The Council's long term strategy for Customer Service will enhance the service further

The authority has hosted over 20 learning visits from other authorities wishing to learn from our groundbreaking advances in customer service. Cllr Richard Gates from Waverly outlined the value of such learning to other authorities ***"It was a great visit and we learned a lot from it. Chorley Borough Council clearly has some excellent ideas. We collectively gained a great deal"***.

Use of Resources

As a result of our innovative and highly successful approach to efficiencies and procurement, outlined in the forward and backward looking efficiency statements 2006, we are on track to achieve our three-year efficiencies 2005/06-2007/8 target of £1.4 million this has allowed us to reinvest in areas of Corporate Priority such as:

- Streetscene
- The Local Strategic Partnership
- Economic Regeneration

In a continued drive for efficiencies the current cabinet have committed to an aspiration of freezing the Borough Council's element of the Council Tax for 2007/08, whilst at the same time further enhancing our already excellent services.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Chorley scored three out of four for Use of Resources in 2005/06, the highest score in Lancashire

The Audit Commission found that

'Costs for major services are at or below average compared with other District Councils... the major service areas are typified by above average levels of performance and comparatively high levels of Customer Satisfaction. In overall terms there is a positive relationship between costs, spending and levels of resident satisfaction'

Partnership Working

Part of this success has been realised by our commitment to actively scrutinise the way in which we deliver our services and to pursue alternative ways of delivering our services where this will deliver benefits. The Council has delivered a number of innovative partnering agreements over the course of the last twelve months including the new management arrangements for the Borough's Leisure Facilities and Duxbury golf course, which will realise £152,000 of savings. Additionally, these agreements are on course to deliver £2,500,000 pounds worth of investment in greatly improved facilities and services.

KEY MESSAGE

Our partnerships with Chorley Leisure Services and Glendale Golf will realise £2.5 Million Pounds of investment in Leisure Facilities in the Borough

Work to outsource the management of the Council's properties and the markets is also well advanced and is currently at the advanced bidder stage. The change to the way in which we deliver our property management function will result in £100,000 of savings and will realise a significant transfer of risk for the Council. The decision to outsource the management of the markets was informed by an Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry into the operation of the markets and feeds into the Council's plans, as outlined in the Corporate Strategy, to transform the town centre.

KEY MESSAGE

Outsourcing of the Council's property services will realise £100,000 of savings and significantly reduce the risk to the authority

Additionally we have pursued initiatives such as the transfer of Fairview Youth and Community Centre into community management. This innovative project will realise savings of £29,000 and will help the Council as it strives to increase levels of engagement and cohesion in our communities. Chorley Borough Council joined forces with construction company Westbury Homes to fund the new £500,000 Fairview Youth and Community Centre in Highfield Road North, Adlington. Westbury was required to contribute £150,000 as part of planning permission for the nearby Fairview Farm housing estate. Plans to take forward Community Management will see the eventual transfer of up to seven community centres and facilities and realise savings of up to £57,000 in 2007/08.

Environment

Our current recycling performance of over 40% exceeds our statutory target of 23% and the 36% target set by the Lancashire Waste Management Strategy. This has significantly reduced the amount of landfill waste generated by households. Just over 24,000 tonnes of household waste went to landfill in 2005/6 compared to over 42,000 tonnes in 2003/4. All of this has been achieved by an increase of just £1 per household per year in the cost of waste and recycling collections in 2005/06.

We recognise that this level of achievement could not have been realised without the co-operation of our residents and have ensured that the information provided to residents has been second to none, the success of this is evidenced by feedback from residents *“The recycling scheme in Chorley is excellent. It is easy to use and easy to understand. It is encouraging people to recycle who may not have done previously”*

Doorstep surveys were conducted by an independent organisation in October 2005. The results showed that 97% knew about the kerbside recycling scheme and 75% rated the scheme above average.

The Council's groundbreaking work in the field of environment has been recognised by the green organisation, an independent environmental group dedicated to recognising environmental best practice around the world. **The Council has been awarded the prestigious Green Apple award for our 'Tip it in the Skip' campaign**, which saw the delivery of community skips to urban and rural wards across the borough with the aim of reducing the number of incidents of fly tipping. 85% of the waste collected through this initiative was recycled, further boosting our already impressive recycling rates.

The Council has also become one of the Countries first 'Green Heroes' an award

presented to Council's who have not only won a Green Apple for environmental best practice, but additionally demonstrated their commitment by helping others to follow their lead. Chorley has been recognized for the way in which it consulted with residents and promoted the new recycling arrangements. The Council's achievements have been published in the Green Book, which will enable other companies, Council's and communities to benefit from our experience and successes.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

The Council's achievements in recycling have been published in the Green Book, which will enable other companies, Council's and communities to benefit from our experience and successes.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

- **Chorley is the top performing authority in Lancashire for recycling with rates in 2005/06 of over 40%**
- **Chorley has the cleanest streets in Lancashire**
- **Chorley has the second best Council Tax and NNDR collection rates in Lancashire**
- **The authority is one of just a handful in Lancashire to see its collection rates climb with the majority seeing a reduction in the amount of council tax they have managed to collect**
- **Processing of Benefits – Chorley is in the top 10% Nationally**

Online Improvements

Over the course of the last twelve months the Council has also delivered huge successes with the development and launch of the Council's intranet site 'the loop', which was a finalist for the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Best Efficiency Award 2006. The aim of this development was to create an internal platform for council-wide efficiency and business process transformation. The success of this project has led to the delivery of savings of first year cashable and non-cashable Gershon efficiencies in the region of £70,000 and has meant that we have become a reference site for others including the North West Centre of Excellence and the Society of Information Technology Managers (SOCITM), who are compiling a best practice guide based on 'theloo'. Martin Greenwood, SOCITM Insight Programme Manager, said: *“It is a model of how*

an intranet development should be tackled and what it should aim to do”.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

The Council achieved the critical BVPI 157 target of having 100% of interactions enabled for electronic delivery by the target date of the 31st December 2005.

We also met the challenge of the Priority Outcomes Programme achieving 27 of the 28 ‘required’ outcomes for which we were responsible. Of the ‘good’ outcomes we achieved 23 of the 28.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Through the use of Business Process Re-engineering and new technology we have

- Improved invoice processing times from 83.27% (Aug 2005) to 94.38% (Aug 2006)
- By March 07 will realise procurement savings of £48,990
- Improved performance in Land Searches from 95.67 (Aug 2005) to 99.45 (Aug 2006)

Our positive approach to technology has been recognised by the Audit Commission who stated that **“sophisticated technology and e-government initiatives provide high quality access and speedy responses and deliver efficiency savings which are passed onto the customer in the form of improvements”.**

Some of the information and services customers can now access online include:

- Councillor details, including a postcode search to find local representatives.
- Access to Committee agendas and reports online.
- An interactive version of the Local Plan.
- Budget consultation information.
- Eplanning information enabling customers to view and download digital copies of drawings and documents accompanying a planning application.
- Council Tax and Benefits information including up to date information about Council Tax bill and Business Rates, payments, adjustments and the ability to swap traditional

bills for online ‘e billing’ and Online access to correspondence issued about Council Tax, Housing and Council Tax Benefits and Business Rates.

- Interactive Housing Maintenance and repairs reporting functionality.
- Licensing applications, including functionality which allows partner organisations to view application details.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

A report, carried out by independent research and testing outfit Site Confidence, shows that our website has beaten FTSE 100 company sites such as Marks and Spencer, BT and Barclays on average download speeds and availability.

2. Progress in delivering wider Community Outcomes

Community Engagement

The Council has continued to develop its approach to Community Leadership and Neighbourhood Management through the piloting of Area Forums, a programme of Community Meetings which bring together various stakeholders and the wider community in a bid to understand and address the issues of local people.

INFORMATION PANEL

Area Forum Pilots

The area forum pilot has:

- Responded to 116 Questions from members of the Public
- Maintained an average attendance of 29 people at each forum meeting
- Seen representation at the meetings from other key partners including; Chorley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police, Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust, Parish Council and the MP for Chorley
- Delivered 8,280 Area Forum News Letters

The pilot was, in part, a response to the Audit Commission's recommendation that the Council develop clearer plans for Local Area Meetings that enable residents to participate in plans for their communities, especially in Rural Areas. The success of the Area Forum approach and delivery is highlighted by Derek Ormerod, Chair of Ulnes Walton Parish Council who states:

"During the last twelve months I have noticed a positive change in the extent and quality of relations between Ulnes Walton Parish Council and Chorley Council. This is evidenced by the increased accessibility of senior officers in direct liaison meetings and in the operation of the Area Forum pilot scheme for the Lostock ward.

It is my impression that, at a senior level, Chorley Council is making a real effort to increase its engagement with the local community and I expect, and look forward to, the development of this positive attitude to effective partnership working in all our dealings with Chorley Council colleagues".

This has been a platform for the launch of the Council's 'You Said, We Did' approach. Which has resulted in a number of changes to the way in which we deliver our services and engage with our communities. One example of the positive impact of Chorley's 'You Said, We Did' approach

has been the recent changes to the operation of the recycling scheme. Following customer feedback and press coverage, a committee of key councillors undertook a review of the receptacles provided for recycling as a result of which new weighted sacks, with fastening lids were distributed to 48,000 homes throughout Chorley. The feedback from Customers about this change has been extremely positive.



Economic Regeneration

The Council continues to drive forward strongly economic regeneration in the Borough, the production of the Economic Regeneration Strategy has provided a strategic and operational focus for this activity and in October 2006, the Council's Executive Cabinet approved the town centre strategy, an ambitious plan to completely transform the town centre, including increasing the number of shops and leisure attractions, raising its profile and encouraging local people and businesses to get more involved. The Council also continues to drive forward the Economic Regeneration agenda regionally through work around the Core Central Lancashire Vision.

Our plans to revitalise the Town Centre are on track, with car parking ticket sales showing that between September 2005 and August 2006, a total of 1,085,288 tickets were bought in the town. That's 20,958 more than the same period the previous year.

INFORMATION PANEL

Strategic Regional Site

The strategic Regional Site, short-listed by APSE for the Best Housing and Regeneration initiative in 2006 is well on the way to delivering:

- Approximately 2000 houses (including affordable units)
- The creation of up to 5,900 jobs
- Two employment areas
- A primary school, railway station, health & community centre, playing fields and green corridors

North West Development Agency said: ***"We have been impressed with the lead taken by the Council to promote and facilitate such a complex and large scale scheme. Through the use of innovation and partnership, a high standard of regeneration, encompassing residential use and commercial development, is being achieved, producing benefits not only for the Community but also for the wider area"***

Affordable Housing

The Council's commitment to delivering affordable housing has led to the creation of 68 affordable Housing Units in 2005/06, this is a great improvement on the 20 units delivered in 2004/05. This included the creation of five units in the rural area of Ulnes Walton where previously no provision existed. This affordable Housing is subject to a letting scheme which gives preference to local residents and is just one of the ways in which we are taking a community leadership approach to addressing issues in our rural communities.

The Council has also worked with neighbouring authorities in Preston, South Ribble and West Lancashire to secure funding from the North West Housing Board and set up the First Steps Scheme. This programme aims to help first time buyers by offering a grant of up to 20 per cent of the purchase price of their home. Our long term commitment to addressing the issue of affordable housing is evidenced by our brokering of a deal with Adactus which will see the delivery of at least 200 affordable housing units over the next five years at no additional cost to the Council.

Greener Environment

The Council has also driven forward the regional and national agenda in the field of sustainable resources and has led a pilot renewable energy study in partnership with Renewables North West and Government Office North West. The authority has also worked in partnership with Barrett Homebuilders, Manchester University and Renewables North West to deliver a ground breaking eco village comprising of eight homes in Buckshaw Village equipped with various types of renewable energy with the aim of assessing effectiveness and reliability of various types of energy.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

The Council's Yarrow Valley Park has been awarded the prestigious Green Flag award.

The Council now uses green energy for all of its buildings. During a 27-month period, the Council will reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 732 tonnes. Additionally, by careful monitoring of market conditions, the Council has been able to secure its electricity prior to major market price increases, saving an estimated £16,000. In October 2006 the Council switched to using bio diesel fuel from sustainable sources for its fleet of maintenance vehicles. This will realise significant savings as the new fuel provides more miles to the gallon and helps to keep engines cleaner,

reducing maintenance and servicing costs and has lower emissions compared to petroleum diesel.

Community Safety

The authority continues to build upon the success of its Community Safety activity, reducing crime levels by 13% and receiving recognition of the significance of this success from Paul Evans, Head of the Police Crime and Standards Unit at the Home Office who stated that "**Chorley has been flagged for the last two successive quarters for its excellent results, compared with its peers**". Key crimes which have been reduced include vehicle crime, burglary, common assault, theft of pedal cycles, robbery and wounding. The partnership is well on the way to meeting its target of reducing these key crimes by 15 per cent and is one of the most successful MAPS (Multi-agency Problem Solving Teams) in the whole of Lancashire.

Through the work of the partnership external funding for Community Safety activity has been maximised and £250,000 has been channelled into CCTV, automatic number plate recognition and the highly successful and well-received 'Alley Gates' scheme.

Young People

The success of this agenda is strongly linked with our work with Community Safety target areas including the provision of diversionary activities for young people. In 2005/06 8293 young people participated in activities in 2005/06, through the 'Get up and Go Programme' of which 54% were from Community Safety Target areas. The highly successful 'On the ladder' sports coaching programme led to the award of 160 coaching qualifications for Young People.

One parent whose children, take part in 'Get up and Go' every school holiday, said: "**As a parent, Get Up and Go! has been an absolute Godsend. It has given my children opportunities to learn things and participate in activities that perhaps, financially, may not have been previously open to them. I think Chorley Borough Council should be applauded for offering these opportunities to local kids from throughout the borough.**"

Housing Service

The Council is on course to successfully transfer its Housing Stock to Chorley Community Housing, the locally based, not for profit organisation, which will take over the management of Chorley's Housing Stock in March 2007 following the highly successful Housing Stock Transfer Ballot. The independent watchdog (PS Consultants) charged

with overseeing the Stock Ballot process stated that **“Chorley BC has taken a commendably structured approach to their Options Appraisal Process, with a high degree of tenant involvement throughout. Throughout the process Chorley BC have tried to be inclusive, they have strived to ensure that all tenants, have been given the opportunities to find out about the process and be informed and involved”.**

The options appraisal process was guided by a Tenant Empowerment Strategy and overseen by a tenant and councillor project steering group. The Project Steering Group is comprised of 15 tenants (drawn from the Tenants Investment Group), and 10 Councillors (with representation from the three principle political parties and an independent) this group made the final recommendation to the Council's Executive Cabinet. We believe that the success of this exercise, was the result of empowering Chorley's tenants to make informed decisions about their future and to lead the process. The quality of our communications is evidenced by the 'Your Home, Your Say' Newsletters issued to tenant keeping them informed throughout the process.

INFORMATION PANEL

Housing Outcomes

- **Chorley was ranked first in the Northwest for rental arrears performance at 1.46% against an upper quartile performance of 2.56%,**
- **Chorley is ranked second in the Northwest for re-let times at 23 days, with the upper quartile figure for the Northwest being 35.15 days.**

Third Party Funding

Chorley Borough Council has been working with both public and private sector organisations to improve facilities for local people by securing third party funding, the funding strategy is the overarching driver for this activity and is closely linked with the Corporate Strategy. For every pound donated by the Council for regeneration projects, third parties have contributed more than £6. Projects including the revitalisation of Westway Ponds in Astley Village, which saw a cluster of overgrown ponds and woodland transformed into a nature reserve for the whole community and a scheme at Brinscall and Withnell on a former railway site transformed into a play area for older children, complete with ball court. More than twenty community improvement projects were completed including works to listed

buildings, buildings in Conservation Areas and projects receiving Green Partnership Awards.

We have built capacity within the community through an innovative scheme, which saw £35,000 of Council funding secure more than £217,000 of investment was secured from third parties.

The Council also launched, the self-help funding database 'chorley4funding', providing free 24hr access to information about different types of funding including Government, lottery, trusts, awards and soft loans.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

- **House Mark have recognised Chorley as leading the field in Housing Performance**
- **Chorley Moor Nook Community House was a finalist in the Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust Achievement Award 2006**
- **Chorley's Rent Collection Arrears Pursuance policy has been recognised as best practice by the Chartered Institute of Housing**
- **Chorley won the Northwest in Bloom Environmental Award 2006 after entering for the first time with a hugely impressive score of 19 ½ out of 20**
- **Chorley won the Best Newcomer and was second runner up in the Large Town Category**
- **The rationalisation of street sweeping schedules have resulted in an enormous improvement in the street scene, particularly in rural areas, doubling the number of times minor roads are swept and realising a reduction in street dirtiness from 14% to 5% (BVPI 199a) and placing us well above the top quartile nationally of 11 for 2004/05 and giving Chorley the cleanest streets in Lancashire.**

3. Improvements in Corporate Governance

The implementation of recommendations around governance have significantly strengthened our Corporate Governance arrangements and will ensure that we are well positioned to deliver as an organisation.

The restructuring of the Audit Committee has resulted in the establishment of a cross party group of members with responsibility for Corporate Governance. The changed terms of reference and revised structure of this committee complies with CIPFA guidance.

The Annual Governance report published by the Audit Commission recognises the progress made in addressing previous weaknesses around data quality, stating that ***“The body has put in place arrangements to monitor the quality of its published performance information, and to report the results to members”*** we have achieved this through the introduction of proactive and standardised quality control arrangements.

We have introduced strengthened programme and project management arrangements led by the Deputy Chief Executive which bring together key players in a systematic way and ensures the delivery of key projects with a particular focus on the Corporate Strategy as the main strategic driver for the authority.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

The North West Centre of Excellence have adopted the toolkit used by the authority to manage projects as their preferred model.

The authority continues to deliver against those areas of focus identified in the Use of Resources Action Plan. Key successes in the strengthening of internal control processes being the implementation of a Whistle Blowing Policy (and the production of an Annual Report (currently in draft) a summary of which will be published in Borough News in December 2006. The Audit Commission's Annual Governance report states that the authority has ***“put in place arrangements to maintain a sound system of internal control”***.

Members have been actively engaged in the process of, scrutinising the budget with a particular focus on scrutinising those, relatively few, areas of comparatively high cost. Recommendations made as a result of this scrutiny process were subsequently accepted and implemented by the Executive Cabinet.

We have developed our member working and are continuing to build upon and utilise the strong skills base we have in our elected members. To this end, we have commissioned a SOLACE review of our political relationships with the aim of developing mechanisms to improve political relationships and maximise the collective value of all members towards to achievement of the Council's objectives.

INFORMATION PANEL

The SOLACE review made eight recommendations for the development of political effectiveness and relationships. The council has accepted and delivered, or is in this process of, delivering against all eight of these recommendations and key areas of progress to date include:

- Reconfiguration of portfolios
- Reconfiguration of Scrutiny
- All party leader liaison meetings now take place on a monthly basis.
- Regular briefings for the Leader of the opposition by the Chief Executive on strategic issues and developments.
- Regular meetings between directors, portfolio holders and 'shadow' members.
- Active involvement in the Lancashire Leadership programme which will build leadership capacity and develop skills in strategic thinking, organisational change partnership and collaborative working
- Learning visits with other Councils
- Plans which feed into the member development programme
- A fully scoped out training programme for members on the full range of roles and responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny programme and the value it can bring
- Attendance by the Chief Executive and Executive Directors at relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Panels.

The SOLACE review contained positive feedback regarding developments in overview and scrutiny, with reference to useful work being done, good cross party relationships and indications that non-Cabinet members are beginning to find scrutiny a satisfying role. The review furthermore highlights a healthy respect for abilities of members in opposing parties- something which the SOLACE peers point out is not common in all Councils

The SOLACE review highlighted the importance of embedding a comprehensive development programme for members. We have taken this forward through a member learning strategy which provides a sustainable, structured and focused approach to member development and training driven by the member development steering group.

This work has been driven further forward through the launch of Members Learning Hour. The learning hour provides an opportunity to actively engage members on a number of areas ranging from key corporate governance issues (managing performance, corporate business planning and ethics, standards and human rights), to progress on key projects and approaches to service delivery. This learning initiative is actively evaluated to determine whether members objectives have been met and to assess effectiveness of delivery.

INFORMATION PANEL

60% of members now have personal development plans in place, which link into the objectives of the Corporate Strategy and are based upon detailed and focused training needs assessments.

Our impressive progress in developing our members has been recognised by the North West Charter on Elected Member Development, at the heart of which lies the declaration of commitment ***“We believe that at the heart of any local authority dedicated to meeting the needs of its community will be a commitment to the development of its elected members.”***

Through this programme, Members have been supported and assisted in playing their vital role in modernising Local Government. The authority has received very positive feedback with regards to our progress towards the Charter and anticipate official confirmation of award of this important and prestigious accreditation in late October 2006.

Overview and Scrutiny

Over the last twelve months a key area of development for us as an authority has been the Overview and Scrutiny function

Among the recommendations around the decriminalisation of parking enforcement made as the result of an Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry around were:

- Recommendations to Park Wise regarding the information supplied to motorists which have been adopted county wide
- A survey of the perceptions of park wise undertaken to inform the Overview and Scrutiny enquiry has now been adopted by the County Council and will be undertaken county wide

A number of responses to this agenda have been delivered, supported by the overarching Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan which acts as the key control document for Executive Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This document has been informed by the centre for Public Scrutiny self-evaluation framework and has allowed us to focus attention on removing barriers to excellence.

1. The Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2006/07 has been designed with specific reference to the Corporate Strategy as the key driver for the authority for the next 3 years and focuses on priority areas for the authority.
2. All draft policy and strategy documents are now submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny committee, enabling routine challenge of the Council's Corporate Strategy and Budget. Progress against the expected outcomes of the overview and scrutiny inquiries will be checked in six monthly monitoring reports.
3. The Chief Executive and Leader meet with Overview and Scrutiny chairs during every committee cycle - this has resulted in more effective two-way communication between the bodies.
4. Overview and Scrutiny are beginning to routinely challenge external partners with inquiries into Park Wise and the Youth and Community Service. Going forward, once the restructuring of the LSP is embedded, other Local Partnership bodies will be included in the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.
5. The Scrutiny process has been further strengthened by the commitment to actively encourage the public to submit Overview and Scrutiny topics and to participate in Scrutiny Inquiries.
6. Going forward, allowing public questions and speaking at meetings will ensure that we improve the level of public participation in the Council's decision-making process.

Capacity Building

We continue to build the capacity of the organisation with initiatives such as the development of Staff Matters. Staff Matters is a consultative body with representation from all Directorates which is delivering strongly improved policies such as the flexible working policy, and ensuring that staff are fully engaged in our journey towards excellence. The success of such initiatives is attested by the results of the Staff Survey, June 2005, which show that

- 75 per cent of staff enjoy working at the Council
- 85 per cent pull together as a team
- 71 per cent are satisfied with their job

Work is well underway to integrate the Council's HR Strategy into the Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy 2005. This is being done in conjunction with five neighbouring Lancashire authorities.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION



Chorley has been recognised as a model of excellence and innovation by

- **The IDeA who have praised the authority for the role it has played in developing the ESD toolkit and the Council's approach to procurement**
- **The National Land and Property Gazetteer who have presented Chorley with the award for innovation for the most creative use of technology. Feedback from the judges stated that *"this entry was an excellent use of technology and web applications to facilitate the council's introduction of an electronic service for a change of address and business name. The application provides the public with a quick and accessible way to apply to change the name of their property or business, either online from their own home computer, or in the One-Stop shop when they come to the Council to request a change. The entry also highlighted the successful integration of services across a number of software platforms/vendors"***

4. Improvements in access to and the quality of services for Hard to Reach Groups

Policy and Strategy

The authority continues to strive to secure genuine equality of opportunity in all of our activities as an employer, service provider and community leader.

We have commissioned the development of Gender and Disability Equality schemes for approval in December 2006, which will inform our response to forthcoming legislative developments and will ensure that we are able to improve levels of access to, and quality of, the services we offer to all of our customers.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

Our performance against BVPI 2b (the duty to promote Race Equality) increased to 89% in 2005/06 against a baseline of 79% in 2004/05.

Following on from the recent restructuring of the Council the Corporate Diversity Group has been restructured and the activity of the group reviewed to ensure that going forward the group provides a real focus and drive for the work that we will be doing to deliver improvements for hard to reach groups.

The Corporate Strategy contains a commitment to develop and deliver a Local Strategic Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy and will be the main driver for our activity in this area over the next twelve months, ensuring that equality of access, opportunity and outcome is central to all that we do. This will also ensure that we are positioned as Community Leaders driving forward the Cohesion agenda within our communities.

Engagement

The authority has enabled Hard to Reach Groups to engage with and influence policy development and development control through the process of joint visioning and consultation on the Local Development Framework and Community Strategy, which specifically targeted Older People, Young Gay and Lesbian, and Women's Groups.

This visioning work has fed into the key strategic documents for the Local Strategic Partnership and for the authority, the Community and Corporate Strategies and will ensure that equality and diversity are fully embedded in all that we are aiming to achieve.

In response to feedback from the community and research by the Primary Care Trust the Council is currently leading on the development of an Asian men's forum within the Borough which will provide vital support and networking mechanisms for this group.

In March 2006 we worked with a variety of partners to launch the Older People's Forum, aiming to take a strategic and co-ordinated approach improving the quality of life for older people across the Borough. The first step on this journey has been the development of an older people's action plan outlining Council's contribution to the wider agenda.

The Council, unusually for a district Council, is currently developing an Every Child Matters action plan and a Youth Matters Action Plan, which will outline the Council's contribution to the wider agenda and ensure that we take a leading role in improving outcomes for children and young people in the Borough.

Work has been undertaken with children with mental illnesses through the Leisure Centre in partnership with CAMS (the mental health unit of the PCT), with the aim of integrating children into mainstream activities at the leisure centers after "sensitivity training" has been provided by the PCT. Plans are in place underway to extend this type of activity to children who are obese.

The Council has also worked with young people to address the issues they face; one example of our ground breaking work with young people is the delivery of an innovative project known as the iPod Group. The group consists of teenagers with a special interest in music coming together to help improve music facilities and local cultural services as part of the Council's strategy to create a young people's cultural quarter. The group will also get advice and information about setting up creative businesses and funding opportunities.

Service Delivery

Our visionary approach to customer service continues to deliver marked benefits for hard to reach groups within our Communities with actions such as the initiation of evening sessions for the Black and Ethnic minority community in the Council's highly successful One Stop Shop. These sessions have enabled us to engage more effectively with the community and gather ideas on how to improve access to and quality of services for the community.

Furthermore One Stop Shop customer services advisors are helping to forge links with the local

community groups and are involved in activities outside working hours with the Asim Women's forum, Disability Forum and Citizens Advice Bureau.

The introduction of the Lancashire Youth and Community surgery was in response to under-use of the One Stop Shop facilities by minority groups.

A specific team has been set up within benefits to increase benefit take up and customer involvement from hard to reach and previously excluded groups.

Actions include:

- Providing benefits information sessions in rural areas and at the mosque feedback from these groups will be used to inform and develop our approach.
- The development of a number of innovative training and awareness raising sessions with child care providers and residential social landlords.
- A community representative from the Mosque involved in providing feedback about the Council's claim and case review forms.
- In partnership with Welfare Rights and the Department for Work and Pensions sending quarterly mail shots to elderly persons not in receipt of pensions credit.
- Joint working with South Ribble to provide leaflets in the four major ethnic languages locally distributed in neighbouring boroughs such as the Hindu temple in Preston. This contributes to our strategic approach to tackling inequalities as the Hindu community does not have a centre for worship in the borough so we are working in partnership with neighbouring authorities to ensure that all of our residents have access to information and services.

INFORMATION PANEL

Improving Outcomes

The Muslim Burial ground opened in April 2006. This is a key development led by the Council in response to community feedback, ensuring that the Muslim Community are now able to undertake burials in the borough.

We continue to work with our partners to deliver equality objectives. The indoor leisure contact was awarded on 1 November 2006, key requirements of the contract centre around hard to reach and disadvantaged groups with targets to increase take up levels for young people,

people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, women and girls, over 60s and those on low incomes.

Employment

In employment terms we have recognised the need for the authority to recruit more young people in a bid to reflect a more diverse demographic. To this end, we introduced the Young Person's Development Scheme in partnership with Runshaw College in October 2005 and the scheme is progressing well. The aim of the scheme is to develop young people's potential in the Borough. All of those recruited into the Scheme have achieved level one NVQ qualifications and are now progressing to level two NVQ. The Council also operates a highly successful apprenticeship scheme with three apprentices currently in the Council's employment training developing tradesmen's skills.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION

All Seasons Leisure Centre has been awarded Inclusive Fitness Status, a quality mark for disability access to leisure facilities, which means that the gym can be used by people with disabilities. It is only one of a handful of gyms with this accreditation in the north of England.

Improving Access

The Council continues to work in close partnership with partners and stakeholders to deliver improvements for hard to reach groups.

The South Lancashire Arts Partnership (SLAP), a charity supported by the Council established to deliver arts projects with hard to reach groups around the borough has brought in over £250,000 in 2005/06. They employ and train professional artists to run projects such as a young peoples music cafe, after school club provision and community arts celebrations. The council recently supported their attempts to move into a new base with a £20,000 grant. The Arts Council have backed the decision to support a young person led cultural quarter which has been developed by the council and slap in partnership with a £13,000 partnership funded post.

The recent refurbishment of the Town Hall was undertaken with input from the Disability Forum at all stages of the process and has been commended by the Forum for its inclusively and success in ensuring that the facility met the aspirations of all users and exceeded the requirements of the DDA.

Harold Rimmer, chairman of the Disability Forum said: ***"We have worked closely with Chorley Council on many projects including the***

changes to the new Lancastrian Suite at the town hall and the One Stop Shop. We have a close working relationship with the Council and will soon be looking at improvements to Astley Hall and Park.”

We continue apace with our work to meet the requirements of the DDA in Council Buildings. We also deliver as a community leader, by facilitating and encouraging disabled access across the borough for example working with Network Rail to provide a disabled toilet in the train station and working with the County Council to improve access to the Town centre Library.

AWARDS AND INNOVATION



In a recent mystery shopper exercise Chorley was the only Local Authority to score 100% across all elements of the disabled access and Customer Service criteria.

Charter Mark assessors found that the Council has a good relationship with the Disability Forum stating that it and takes on board its ideas and acts on them.

5. Progress made in developing robust plans for improvement and delivery against them

There is significant evidence outlined earlier in the self-assessment, which demonstrates that the Council continues to deliver excellence in a range of service areas.

We have put the building blocks in place, which will enable us to develop even further as an organisation and will ensure that the Council's journey of improvement continues apace.

INFORMATION PANEL

Delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan 2004-2007

Of the 34 actions identified in the Corporate Improvement Plan the Council has delivered 32 (97%), the remaining two have been carried over into the Corporate Strategy and will be delivered in 2006/07. Six of those actions delivered will be reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis to ensure continuous improvement, e.g. Performance Management.

Community Leadership

The authority has in place strong and visionary leadership and a clear strategic direction for the Council and the community in the form of the draft Community Strategy 2005-2025 and the Corporate Strategy 2006-2009. With a new senior management structure in place which is fit for purpose, forward looking, and innovative, the authority is well positioned to deliver for the Community we serve. We have recognised that the challenge for us over the coming twelve months will be embedding the processes we have put in place to deliver increasing value for money, excellent corporate governance and a strong, fully integrated, performance management framework and culture.

The Community Strategy 2005-2025 was successfully launched in October 2005 after a broad ranging series of consultation and community engagement events, which ensured that the aims of Community Strategy accurately reflect the aspirations of the Community and that the actions we will deliver in partnership, are driven by customer needs. The Community Strategy identifies a long-term vision (to 2025) for the Borough, along with 12 outcomes that will turn this vision into reality and identifies five priority areas (key drivers of change) that will focus attention on achieving these outcomes. We are now confident that we know what matters to the community and are well positioned to deliver against this.

We have recognised that an effective and inclusive LSP structure is crucial to the delivery of the Community Strategy. The Council is currently leading a review of the structure and membership of the Chorley Partnership to ensure it is positioned to deliver the outcomes outlined in the strategy. The review of the partnership will realise a fit for purpose structure, with the right people in the right positions to deliver for our Communities.

The five priority outcomes of the Community Strategy are mirrored in the Corporate Strategy, the Council's highest level policy document, which also contains a sixth strategic objective of ensuring that Chorley Borough Council is a performing organisation. The Corporate Strategy is the driver for all that we as a Council have set out to deliver over the coming three years and will ensure that we focus our resources on the Community's priorities.

This golden thread flows through the strategic and operational planning framework via a series of Long Term Outcomes, which will be achieved through the delivery of 38 key actions in 2006-07. These key actions are, in turn, fed into Business Plans and individual performance objectives. To ensure high-level ownership and accountability for delivery, each of the high level strategic objectives is owned either by the Chief Executive or an executive director along with an executive member. Directors take ownership of the delivery of key actions and targets.

Performance Improvement

Plans are in place to check delivery against both the Community and Corporate strategies on a quarterly basis through strengthened programme, project and performance management mechanisms. Performance Plus, the Council's performance management software, will facilitate the effective monitoring and management of delivery of the Community and Corporate Strategy. Performance monitoring reports will be considered by Strategy Group and Executive Cabinet, on a quarterly basis. These reports will be drawn from Performance Plus and contain commentary on progress, slippage and reasons for under performance.

Members will be further engaged in the process of managing delivery of the Community and Corporate Strategies through quarterly PerformanceRoundTables with the relevant Cabinet Member and Executive Director. The delivery of key corporate strategy actions and targets and the performance of BVPIs, LAA targets and other key performance data and where necessary, declining and static performance will be challenged by the Deputy

Leader of the Council and the Director of Policy and Performance. Where appropriate, action plans to improve performance are developed and progress against delivery monitored at future meetings.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and panels monitor progress on performance and the delivery of strategies and action plans within their respective areas. Any areas of concern to members will be raised by Overview and Scrutiny for closer monitoring and if necessary officers are invited to attend the committee to explain reasons for declining performance and future plans for delivery.

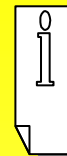
Clearly, our track record in customer services, and in delivering the e.government agenda, is exemplary. As a testament to our commitment to taking forward this agenda we are now taking forward the delivery of the Customer Focused Access and Service Design Strategy. This document sets the agenda for improving customer engagement and promoting a better understanding of services. Using this information we will manage customer migration to the most appropriate and efficient access channels.

We continue to deliver improvements in areas such as development and regeneration, the amalgamation of planning and economic regeneration has ensured that we are able to take a strategic approach to planning and regeneration in the Borough. Improvements in planning application process times and the realisation of benefits around business process re-engineering have formed the precursor to improvements to the level of Customer Service. Recent developments include the publication of a Customer Service Charter for the Development Control unit, along with a Section 106 improvement plan.

These improvements are being delivered in conjunction with a programme of Customer Care Training, which we are confident, will see dramatic improvement in levels of Customer Satisfaction. Training has also been undertaken to develop member understanding of key planning issues such as telecoms which we are also confident with realise significant improvements.

INFORMATION PANEL

Working with our Rural Communities



The Corporate Strategy outlines a long-term objective to improve the quality of life in rural communities with a target to improve satisfaction with the Borough as a place to live in Rural Wards being developed which we anticipate will be in the region of 5% improvement by March 2009.

Key actions to deliver this have included:

- **The development of the Area Forum Pilot Scheme, to enable residents to participate in plans for their communities, especially in Rural Areas**
- **Work with Rural Parish Councils, including assistance in the development of Parish Plans (Whittle-le-Woods, Coppull, Heapey and Wheelton Plans)**
- **Development of Cultural Champions to access funding and broker more cultural projects**
- **Provision of, and support given, to Rural Arts projects in Mawdsley, Withnell, Croston and Heapy.**
- **Improvements to the accessibility of services for those living in Rural Areas such as the Pay Point scheme where customers have been provided with the ability to make payments to the Council at over 200 Pay Points across the Borough. Many of these outlets have longer opening hours than the civic offices as well as opening over the weekend and have been particularly well received by those living in Rural Areas**