



Chorley Council Annual Report

2013/14



Welcome to Chorley Council's Annual Report

Last year we set out to achieve even more and identified a number of projects to improve outcomes for residents in our key priority areas.

We have had a busy 12 months with some amazing achievements including a number of programmes supporting new and existing local businesses, building community events to support the evening economy such as Chorley Live, helping the creation of new jobs through employment support initiatives and the delivery of a number of projects in order to revitalise the town centre, all of which help us build a strong local economy. We are focused on planning for our future and generating income, the recent purchase of Market Walk will create an income stream that we can put towards services for residents.

It is important to us that the initiatives we deliver impact in all areas of the borough, and this year we have undertaken a variety of activity to meet the needs of our more rural areas, such as improving neighbourhood amenities, delivering affordable housing, tackling fuel poverty and working within the community to improve health and well-being. As the government shrinks public sector funding we are recognising and rewarding people who give their time to volunteering activities through the Time Credits programme.

This report sets out some of the improvements we have made but also more importantly considers what is still to be done. Transformation, innovation and continuous improvement sit at the heart of Chorley Council as we face the challenges ahead. I'm confident that by working together we can continue 'Making It Happen'.

**Councillor Alistair Bradley, Leader of Chorley Council,
Executive Member for Economic Development and Partnerships**



Overall performance of 2013/14 key projects has gone very well; delivering a number of schemes for both residents and businesses. We have been proactive in tackling areas where we are underperforming, and remain committed in improving.

We will continue to drive forward and do even more in 2014/15, delivering positive outcomes for the residents of Chorley.

Councillor Peter Wilson, Deputy Executive Leader, Executive Member (Resources)



Introduction - Making it happen in Chorley

About us

Chorley Council delivers a range of services to residents, businesses and visitors across Chorley. For example we empty your bins, keep your streets clean and tidy, run the leisure centres providing activities for people of all ages, deal with planning applications and maintain the lovely parks and open spaces we have in the borough.

Our Vision

An ambitious Council that achieves more by listening to the whole community and exceeding their needs.

About Chorley in 2013/14

The Council's Corporate Strategy sets out the council's priority areas, which are based on what you have told us is important to you.

This report provides an overview of some of the work that was carried out for each of the priority areas during 2013/14.

The Challenges in 2013/14

During this period the Council managed further reductions in funding from central government, legislative changes particularly around planning and welfare reform and invested in the local economy during a period of recession.

The impact at a local level was increasing levels of debt and deprivation for some of our communities. This report outlines some of the initiatives we delivered to reduce these levels and also highlights what we will do during 2014/15 to support communities in becoming economically active and self-sustaining.





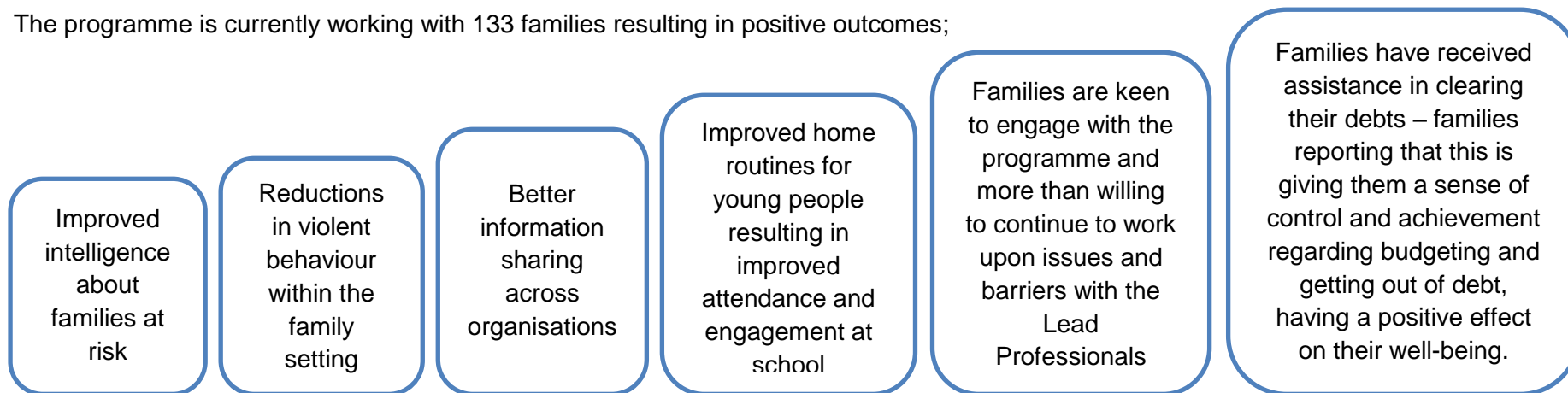
Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all

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

Working Together With Families – This three year programme aimed at helping the most troubled families across the borough is already proving a success. A cohort of Lead Professionals has been specifically trained and developed in delivering a range of support to the families they are working with, eliminating the need for the families to seek support from multiple agencies. This co-ordinated approach has enabled individual families to reduce debt by accessing available grants, arrange direct support for their young people resulting in improved social skills and attendance at school, and working with the families to increase employment opportunities. This new way of working with families is providing positive outcomes, often within weeks, the interventions often preventing escalations to other services with Lead Professionals reporting increased family resilience and resourcefulness.

The programme is currently working with 133 families resulting in positive outcomes;



133 INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN THE WORKING WITH FAMILIES PROGRAMME





Community development - The Chorley Time Credits programme is a way of thanking residents for their volunteering contribution, one time credit is earned for every hour given.

Volunteers are reporting that their earned time credits are enabling them to undertake many activities they would not have otherwise been able to do, such as going to see a play at the Chorley Little Theatre for the first time, with others 'gifting' their time credits to friends and family enabling them to have days out at places such as Lancaster Museum and Clitheroe Castle.

Volunteers have been busy earning their time credits in a variety of ways, such as helping at community events, leading health walks, offering friendship to families and individuals in need, and providing much needed office and admin support to local voluntary organisations.

79 ORGANISATIONS ARE NOW EARNING AND SPENDING TIME CREDITS
34% increase from last year

732 MEMBERS ARE SIGNED UP TO TIME CREDITS IN CHORLEY
33% increase from last year

12,706 HOURS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
87% increase from last year

Storehouse Food Bank - Changes as a result of the Welfare Reforms combined with the economic climate have had a significant impact for individuals and families in Chorley, while food banks do not deal with the long term underlying issues they do help individuals and families in a solid practical way at a time when they are both vulnerable and exposed to other risks.

The Storehouse Food Bank project ensures that there is a provision available to meet the needs of local people particularly in crisis situations, but with a focus on early intervention and encouraging people to take responsibility and ownership so that they don't find themselves in a position where they can't afford food and basic necessities on a repeat basis. . Residents referred to the Storehouse food bank are offered a free hot meal and a listening ear to talk about their issues as well as their food parcels.

£5,000 AWARDED TO THE STOREHOUSE FOOD BANK TO ENABLE THEM TO MEET INCREASING DEMAND FROM VULNERABLE RESIDENTS MOST IN NEED OF HELP AND ASSISTANCE - funding of £15,000 provided for 2014/15



Neighbourhood Working - The Council has been working actively with local parishes and residents on a variety of improvements tailored to meet the needs of each community. Community food growing has taken place in Chorley South East, footpaths have been improved in Clayton and Whittle-le-woods and work to support local businesses has been undertaken in rural Southern parishes.

A dedicated team have also been working with residents to clear up 'grot' spots across the borough. In Chorley Town East alleys and back streets have been cleared and abandoned items removed, improving the cleanliness and environment of the area for residents.

In Western and Southeast parishes residents have been given help to remove their unwanted bulky household items. Skips have been provided making disposal easier for residents and where possible items have been recycled. These events are having a positive effect throughout the community, as well as bringing residents together to improve the amenity of their neighbourhoods their unwanted items are being put to good use. A recent clean up event resulted in an unwanted bicycle being passed on to a resident enabling them to travel to and from their place of work, what had been a difficult journey was immediately made easier.

During four clean up events which ran through October and November streets were litter picked, ginnels were cleared and an astonishing 10 eight tonne and three 32 tonne skips were filled with waste and recycling

A canoe was one of the more unusual items brought along to be dumped at a community clean-up day in Croston

“There are lots of well signed footpaths through the fields and we often walk down and through Yarrow Valley Park (near Birkacre) which is a delight”
A new Chorley resident

176 TONNES OF WASTE WAS REMOVED DURING FOUR CLEAN UP EVENTS THROUGH OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER



Overcoming Social Isolation

Social isolation is an issue in Chorley, particularly for older people, having significant impact on health and wellbeing. To address these issues a pilot **Meals on Wheels** service was implemented during the winter months to support vulnerable residents in some of our more rural Western parishes and rural wards such as Brinscall.

As well as delivering hot meals to people’s homes the service also had many value added aspects, providing extra support and safety checks, along with a level of company and social interaction to support the most vulnerable residents in the borough. The positive outcomes of the Pilot and high levels of customer satisfaction has resulted in the service being extended to cover the entire borough during 2014/15.

100% of customers were satisfied with the helpfulness of the staff

Good service, very helpful.

91% of customers said they would continue with the service if it was available

Very good when the weather is bad, relieves pressure on family members

100% of residents felt reassured knowing someone was coming to deliver their meal during the day

Hope it continues, been very useful especially over the winter.

Additional support services have included:

- Cups of tea made
- Letters posting
- Stamps purchased
- Newspaper purchased
- light bulb changed
- Taken rubbish out
- Meal plated and chopped up
- Help reading letters
- Phone calls made for customers
- Wheelie bins in right place

717 MEALS DELIVERED ACROSS THE MORE ISOLATED WESTERN PARISHES DURING THE 10 WEEK PILOT PERIOD



A strong local economy

Improving the town centre - The council has been working hard to achieve its vision of a vibrant town centre, some of the things we have done include:

- Established a town centre master plan identifying a number of opportunities for investment and setting out a clear plan of actions to improve the town centre
- Purchased Market Walk shopping centre, enabling us to have more influence in improving and ensuring a sustainable future for the town centre
- Developed a programme of car park improvements and revised car parking tariffs including free parking on a Saturday afternoon
- Reopened Market Street to traffic and provided on street parking
- Completed the refurbishment of the former McDonald's site, £350,000 has been invested transforming the site into four high quality retail units for rent

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



Supporting the evening economy

2013/14 saw one of our biggest programmes of events to date with over 20,000 people attending a variety of entertainment across the borough.

One huge success was the **Chorley Live** event run by Chorley Council in conjunction with the Creative Network. Over 150 acts performed during the two day event with over 4500 people visiting the town centre to listen to the live performances. The event brought a real community spirit to the town and provided a boost to the evening traders supporting the acts.

Nigel Stewart of the creative network, who developed the 'Live' concept said this was the biggest and most successful event so far.

Brilliant! I've never seen the town so busy!

Can we do this every week?



Reducing the Gap – Whilst the borough is considered relatively affluent there is a growing gap between our most prosperous communities and those facing deprivation and worklessness, with the largest cohort of JSA claimants aged between 25 and 49 years.

This year the Council successfully secured funding to recruit an employability officer to work with this group and help reduce the gap. Claimants receive support with CV's, access to training, volunteering opportunities and placements on local employment programmes. The service is making a big difference; claimants are reporting how beneficial it is to have one point of contact, someone who knows them and their history. They feel listened to and appreciate that referrals to training and volunteer opportunities are specific to their needs and this is helping them achieve their goals.

Although still in its early days this service has already supported 11 people back into full time employment. The council is looking to extend this service during 2014/15.

One claimant wanted to move into a career in administration, although they had a background in construction they were finding this work increasingly tiring and this was having a negative impact on the quality of time they spent with their young family. The claimant had worked with other employment support professionals to try and find a way into administrative work but had been left feeling frustrated and their confidence was at an all-time low.

After seeing an article in Chorley Guardian the claimant made an appointment with the council's employability officer and after receiving help and support with their CV and interview techniques they successfully secured an 8 week placement. Their line manager was so impressed with the work they had done during the placement the claimant was offered a permanent position.



The claimant recently got in touch to tell us how overjoyed they are, they have a job that is both challenging and interesting but not as physically exhausting, their family life is much better.

I met with the employability officer a few months ago and they have been absolutely fantastic, after arranging a placement I have now been offered a temporary contract with LCC. I am thoroughly enjoying it & hope that this is the start of a rewarding career.

There are many opportunities for people aged under 25 but nothing for older people, well done Chorley Council on providing these opportunities.

34.5%

DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE CLAIMING JOBSEEKERS ALLOWANCE IN APRIL 2014 when compared to the previous year



Inward Investment - Encouraging new businesses to invest and locate in Chorley has the potential to have the biggest impact in terms of creating jobs and growing the local economy.

In March 2014 the Council launched its Inward Investment Campaign, aimed at attracting new businesses to the borough and creating new jobs, the campaign was launched with the lighting of Rivington Pike during rush hour. The Pike could be seen for miles and generated lots of interest and media attention, as well as letting people know where we are it also got people talking about what Chorley has to offer. The lighting of the Pike coincided with the launch of the Choose Chorley for Business website which experienced over 1000 views in its first week. These events are putting Chorley on the map as a place to do business.

The Chorley local plan, approved in 2013/14 allocated 86 hectares of land as employment sites, which if brought forward, have the potential to create thousands of jobs for local people. Developing just half of the sites could provide over 3,000 jobs, more than Chorley's current unemployment levels.

Supporting New Businesses - we've seen 117 new businesses set up in the borough in the last year with support from our **business support service**. These new businesses are forecast to create 348 new jobs with a projected turnover of £4.2 million.

The service offers a complete package for people setting up in business from grant aid, advice and support through to regular workshops on running a business and more.

"The business is going very well and I'm pleased with the help I've already received from the council and it's also good to know that there is the mentoring and support available from the council as well."

Victoria Garside
owner of a business start-up 'Chocobella'

"Chorley is a good area to run a business from because of the transport links, most of our clients are based in Manchester but we would never have been able to afford such large premises in Manchester, being located in Chorley we are only 30 minutes away if we need to meet them"

Blink-Photo

"Chorley is a fantastic area to set up a business, with a wide range of benefits, property is cost effective and there is a wealth of high quality business accommodation available. If you are thinking of setting up a business in the North West then Chorley could be the ideal place to start looking"

Andrew Porter Limited
removals, storage and logistics specialists

97.7% OF BUSINESSES IN CHORLEY SURVIVED FOR 12 MONTHS - the 24 month business survival rate is 95.85%



Supporting existing businesses - Chorley’s comprehensive business support service which was established in 2012 has developed an excellent reputation with high levels of customer satisfaction. As well as supporting town centre businesses much work has been undertaken this year supporting businesses across Southern, Western and Eastern parishes. Examples of the work carried out this year include:

‘Boost Your Business’ skills development workshops and a quarterly e-newsletter.

Providing general advice and support to 748 existing businesses, distributing £405,000 in grants and supporting them to create an estimated 667 new jobs

Three Choose Chorley Business Network events have taken place, providing a forum for local business leaders to gain more business contacts, learn something new and be kept in the loop as to what is happening in Chorley, these events have attracted over 300 attendees

Employment Support Initiatives - This year the Council worked with Runshaw College and other partners in delivering a joint employment project supporting young people into apprenticeships.

At the end of year one 39 young people have been employed by Chorley businesses. 18 of these vacancies have been taken up by young people aged 16-18 not in employment, education or training (NEET) and a further 21 taken up by those previously unemployed.

- The percentage of 18-24 year olds claiming Job Seekers allowance has dropped to 4.5% at Feb 2014 compared to 6.8% at Feb 2013. This is the lowest figure since Sept 2008.
- Over the past 12 months the % of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training has continued to fall, reporting at 5.1% and nearing its target of 5%.

£91,758 AWARDED TO 14 LOCAL BUSINESSES IN TOWN CENTRE AND LOCAL SERVICE CENTRE GRANTS TO ASSIST WITH SHOP REFURBISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS contributing to the revitalisation of the town centre



Clean safe and healthy communities

Quality parks and open spaces

A programme of works has now been developed to support and improve the offer to visitors at Astley Park and Hall. Work to improve facilities, visitor attractions and the quality and number of events held at the park will begin during 2014/15. Raising the profile of this key tourist attraction that has just been given a prestigious award of excellence by the popular visitor and travel review site TripAdvisor, encouraging even more people to come to the area.

Found this place on Tripadvisor and thought it looked nice and it far exceeded our expectations.....
What can I say - WOW!

I love historic buildings and this is one of the best. There's a lot to do and see

You can easily spend a whole day here and I would highly recommend that you do! We plan to go again,



Chorley Pals exhibition – a new semi-permanent exhibition to commemorate Chorley's role in WWI opened last June and has seen over 17,000 visitors through the door.

It features memorabilia from the war, stories from those who fought on the battlefields and a real-life bunker experience. It's attracted people from far and wide with a keen interest in history and those wanting to learn about Chorley's past.

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

Britain in Bloom has put Chorley on the national map, after winning the Gold Award in North West in Bloom, Chorley has been selected to represent the region in the 'small city' category of the UK finals. The programme of work to prepare for judging is well underway, helping to build community engagement and show case what Chorley has to offer.



**RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM
Gold Medal 2013**

48% OF ALL THE WASTE WE PRODUCE IN CHORLEY IS RECYCLED AND COMPOSTED, AND CHORLEY COUNCIL REMAINS ONE OF THE HIGHEST PERFORMING WASTE COLLECTION AUTHORITIES IN LANCASHIRE



Improving Housing Standards - Chorley has topped the charts in a Government analysis of affordable homes built in Lancashire, with 500 homes being built in the borough in the past three years. Our performance as a local authority is bucking the national trend of a decline in house building and Chorley is proud to be contributing to the overall housing supply when there is a national shortage of housing. 129 affordable homes were delivered in 2013/14 and a vibrant programme of new homes is underway for 2014/15.





Support for the third sector - The council has maintained its commitment to the third sector awarding **£95,738** to local voluntary, community and faith sector organisations enabling them to deliver services in the borough that contribute towards achieving our vision of Chorley as a place where people will be healthy and happy in safe communities where they can achieve their ambitions.

Funding for 2013/14 has supported a number of organisations including -

Circle Counselling service which supports victims who have experienced domestic abuse. This year they were able to deliver over 500 sessions to support clients referred to their service, 379 more than in 2012/13. The funding they received also enabled them to bridge the gap and extend their service to include males; previously there had been no support service of any kind available to men in the area.

Home Start provides practical help and support and friendship to families who have children aged between 0-11 years and who may need support for a variety of reasons such as bereavement, isolation, illness, or people who may just find parenting a struggle. Funding this year has enabled home start to support 132 families within Chorley, delivering interventions such as home visits, family support groups and parenting courses, achieving better outcomes for the children and families involved.

Health and wellbeing

Chorley council are proactively working with partners to facilitate the delivery of the Friday Street Health Centre, the centre is key in reducing health inequalities in Chorley. To date a project board has been established and a high level of agreement has been reached from all partners. The council will continue to assist the progress of this development in order to achieve better health outcomes in one of the most deprived areas of Chorley.

Dementia Friendly Community - As a member of the Central Lancashire Dementia Action Alliance our key priority is encouraging people to understand what dementia is. So far all our front line staff have received dementia awareness training, enabling them to identify and in turn support dementia sufferers.

Over £10,000 of funding has been awarded to community organisations, enabling them to deliver activities to sufferers that maintain their life skills and self-confidence, allowing them to remain in their community for as long as possible and provide training and support for their carers.

The next stage will be to raise awareness amongst residents, enabling us to take steps towards become a **Dementia Friendly Community**, supporting people who suffer from the debilitating disease and their carers.





Sports and Active Programmes

55,388 people have taken part in ‘Get up and Go’ activities during 2013/14. This multi activity programme for young people offers a wide range activities from holiday camps to school programmes and more.



Just wanted to say how much both my boys enjoyed the summer programme, all staff were extremely professional

To further improve the activities on offer staff have been working closely with community organisations in each of the eight neighbourhood areas. Over 160 visits have taken place over the last year to ensure we deliver programmes that meet the needs of residents in each of the neighbourhood areas helping them become more physically literate and active. A diverse range of support and advice has been delivered such as offering bespoke services to schools to enhance the physical activity they offer both during the day and through after school clubs, helping kick start

new clubs working in partnership with them to enable them to become self-sustaining and assisting community groups with funding applications, one such case is Chorley Cricket Club who were successful in securing £50,000 of funding after their previous attempts had failed, enabling them to improve facilities.

The events are always well organised and managed and all your team have been fantastic



The team has also secured and delivered 2 successful **Doorstep Sports Clubs** and are just one of a small number of organisations awarded funding and support in Lancashire. Focused on the doorstep of our most deprived communities this multi-sport club focuses on young people aged 14+ giving them access to activities they would not otherwise be able to take part in. These programmes are

becoming self-sustaining as the young people taking part begin to volunteer to coach and mentor other young people taking part in the programmes.

Once again, our children have been able to experience new and exciting sports

This work is providing residents with opportunities that they would not otherwise have had, with many people going on to participate in regular sports activities, increasing their skills and levels of health and wellbeing.

7.4% INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF VISITS TO COUNCILS LEISURE CENTRES IN 2013/14 - this equates to an increase of 74,915



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

Credit Union - In August 2013 the Council joined forces with Unify Credit Union to open a high street shop in the town centre. The Credit Union offers people a safe and alternative way of saving and borrowing money and is proving to be a real success. After just nine months of operation membership has exceeded initial expectations, providing Chorley residents with an alternative to loan sharks and pay day lenders.

What will success look like?

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



£60,000

IN SAVINGS FOR RESIDENTS – based on residents taking out a loan with the credit union rather than pay day lenders



I want to search for...

Search

my account
Log In

- Home
- Do it online
- What's on
- My Chorley
- Contact Us

My Account – We are committed in adopting a ‘digital’ first approach, offering our residents an alternative way to get in touch with us other than ringing us or coming into see us and in October launched the My Account service. This service gives residents the ability to easily log and track service requests 24/7. Over 6377 people have registered with the service since it was launched and is proving a big hit;

Popular Tasks

- Do it online**
 - Apply for it ▶
 - Report it ▶
 - Complaint ▶
 - Compliment ▶
 - General Enquiry ▶
 - Insurance Claims Portal ▶
- Download it**
 - Complain about a Councillor ▶
 - Complaints leaflet ▶
 - Customer Charter ▶
- Pay for it**
 - Pay by direct debit ▶
 - Pay for it ▶

Chat Now

Quite impressed with @ChorleyCouncil reported fly tipping yesterday online, can see them cleaning it. That's pretty impressive

'I really liked the online method of contacting the Council as this lets me know how my query is progressing' (Elections)

Within an hour of submitting a complaint about dog fouling someone was despatched to scoop up all the offending items. Thank you for your consideration and response

Excellent kept informed at all times' (Waste Collection)

'Prompt response, very impressed' (Transactional Services)

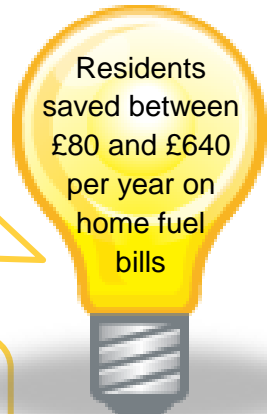
73% OF RESIDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THE COUNCIL RUNS THINGS - a significant increase from 50% in 2008



Tackling Fuel Poverty - Recent figures show that Chorley is performing well in terms of tackling fuel poverty; the number of households living in fuel poverty has reduced from 10% to 8.2%, the borough having the third lowest percentage of households living in fuel poverty in Lancashire. Households are considered to be in fuel poverty when they have required fuel costs that are above average and were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line. As the high and growing cost of gas and electricity increasingly pressurises household budgets many households are expected to cut back on heating their homes due to worries over these costs, potentially posing serious risks to the health of older people.

To address these issues that Council has put in place a number of initiatives;

'Warm Homes and Healthy People' project aimed to help vulnerable older people both to stay warm in their homes and to access health services. Over 200 requests came through for this service over the winter months which provided residents with advice on energy suppliers, delivered heating system maintenance and service, carried out draught exclusion work, and provided access to a transport service enabling vulnerable people particularly in our more rural parishes to keep medical appointments.



People Power - This year the Council has also joined forces with other councils across Lancashire bulk buying gas and electricity at auctions. Over 10,000 people across Lancashire have now registered with this collective bargaining scheme.

The council has also recently launched its **one to one energy switch** service to help people cut the cost of their energy bills. The energy switching support service offers a one-to-one service helping people search for the best possible deal from energy providers. The service not only takes people through the switching process it also helps with any 'aftercare' issues there may be once the switch has taken place.

8.2% OF HOUSEHOLDS IN CHORLEY ARE LIVING IN FUEL POVERTY - the third lowest percentage across Lancashire



Peer Review - In continually seeking to improve its performance the council participated in the Local Government Association Peer Challenge – a team of experienced elected member and officer peers from around the country spent three days on site speaking to council staff, councillors, external partners and stakeholders as well as attending meetings and visiting key sites. The report also highlights a number of recommendations that the Council will be taking forward during 2014/15.

Highlights from the report include;

Chorley Council is a well led ambitious council

The Chorley Council brand is trusted – it is a ‘can-do’ council it gets things done and delivers good services

The Council is well regarded by external partner agencies who value our ‘can-do’ approach

The Council has a clear drive to make a difference and innovate



Supporting Employees Well-being - In February the authority became one of only a few councils in the North West to be awarded the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, a national award given to organisations that are committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of their employees.

Investing in staff is really important to the Council and a number of health initiatives have been implemented during 2013/14 including issuing 67 flu vaccinations, diabetes checks, smoking cessation promotion and increasing the number of providers for physio & counselling services. Staff are encouraged to actively seek treatment for minor conditions using the council funded healthcare cash plan, which contributes to the well-being of the council.

6.44 DAYS SICK PER EMPLOYEE IN 2013/14 - this is the third lowest in Lancashire

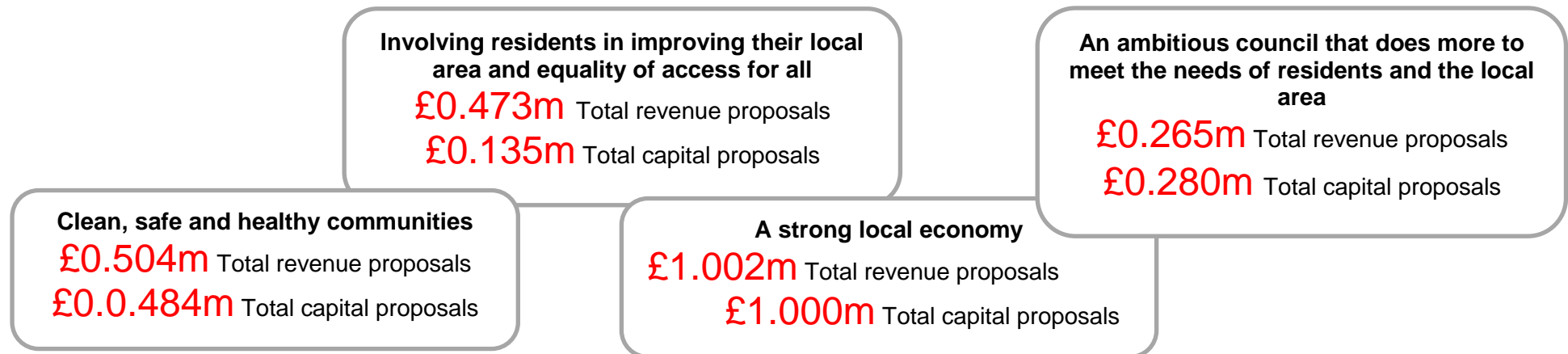


Council spending

The Council’s budget management in 2013/14 has been strong, spending has been contained and significant budget efficiencies have been achieved, however, further budget savings will be required to bridge the funding gap in future years

Council Tax was frozen during 2013/14 remain at the same level as 2012/13. Facilitated by the successful implementation of the budgetary efficiency programme Council Tax levels will remain frozen for 2014/15.

During 2013/14 the Council financed a programme of new investment totalling £2.824m., this investment programme has been added to for 2014/15 and now totals £4.143m. This programme of investment supports the council’s four main corporate priorities and will see new and continuous investments made in the following areas -



Further information on the projects that will be delivered for each of the priority areas are set out in the Council’s budget papers. You can find the papers on the council’s website, www.chorley.gov.uk and by searching for Council Meetings, Full Council, February 25th 2014.



Making It Happen in 2014/15 – The Challenges

Customer Satisfaction

Ensuring that customers are satisfied with the services they receive from the Council is very important to us. We measure satisfaction in our services in a number of ways including a comprehensive resident's survey every few years that captures resident's views and levels of satisfaction with the council, together with a monthly customer survey, which seeks feedback from residents on the specific services they have requested from us.

The 2013 resident's survey showed that satisfaction has either improved or remained the same when compared with results from 2008. It also showed that 73% of people were satisfied with the way the council runs things, a significant improvement on the 50% satisfaction recorded in 2008.

However, in terms of the monthly customer survey dissatisfaction levels have remained above our challenging 20% target, averaging 28.5% throughout 2013/14. The focus of customer dissatisfaction is around us keeping customers informed as we process their requests, and this is an area we are targeting for improvement in 2014/15.

Social Isolation

Social isolation has a significant impact on health and well-being, impacting both on the individual and resources within the community.

Research has shown that the likelihood of social isolation increases with age and is therefore most common in those groups who are older, live alone, have chronic health or mobility problems, do not have access to a car and whose family networks are geographically dispersed.

Whilst much work has already been undertaken in addressing the issue of social isolation the Council recognises that Chorley has the most rapidly ageing population in the North West, with 20.6% of the boroughs population estimated to be aged 65 or over by 2020, overcoming social isolation is therefore a key priority.



Developing Chorley's Economy

Creating jobs through attracting new business and regenerating run down areas of the borough are the key to improving the quality of life for residents, meaning this is the organisation's top priority.

In the last two years the authority has invested more than £2 million in doing just that with the results starting to speak for themselves. We've helped more than 1,300 businesses during this period, creating an estimated 2,000 jobs, many of which will have gone to local people meaning they can enjoy the benefits of being in work.

Unemployment is also relatively low with only 5.3% (2,900 people) out of work - it is below the regional (8%) and national (7.5%) averages.

Despite the positive outlook for Chorley there are a number of challenges that still need to be addressed, particularly around job creation, inward investment, improving the offer in the town centre and reducing the gap between our most deprived and least deprived communities.

Budget

For a number of successive years local authorities have faced fundamental change and a period of significant budget reductions and challenges. This has been triggered by the austerity measures implemented by the Government to reduce overall public sector spending and Government funding is likely to continue to diminish. Projections for Chorley Council show that the budget deficit position may reach £2.200m by 2016/17.

To address the budget gap the council is focused on bringing in additional income in order to make the council more financially self-sufficient and reduce costs whilst minimising the impact for residents.



How will we continue making it happen?

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

- ✓ **Responding to the Welfare Reform Act** – we will work with key partners in delivering our Welfare Reform Action Plan, helping to build resilience in local communities so that residents can prepare and adapt to the realities of the Welfare Reform changes and deliver quality affordable homes to meet the needs of local residents, creating sustainable communities
- ✓ **Investing in the local economy** - Creating jobs for local people is one of the Council's top priorities. We will deliver our plans to attract inward investment, support new and existing business. This will include working with land owners and developers to bring forward key employment sites over the coming years.
- ✓ **Reducing levels of social isolation** - the council will continue to work closely with residents putting in place interventions, such as community kitchens and transport and extending the Meals on Wheels service to support healthier and more engaged communities
- ✓ **Developing a vibrant town centre** - the Council will continue to deliver visible improvements to the town centre through investment and targeted projects such as the development of Market Walk.
- ✓ **Delivering efficient services** – work is underway throughout the organisation to identify areas of duplication and opportunities to improve our business processes. We are committed to developing better ways of working and replace income streams to improve and enhance our service delivery.
- ✓ **Chorley Public Service Reform Board** - The drive towards the integration of health and social care plus the other challenges on public services has led us to form the Chorley Public Service Reform Board. With a clear focus on how organisations can collectively deliver high quality public services to the public efficiently and effectively the board is initially looking to redesign the way well-being services are provided to ensure a better service for communities and provide the best outcomes and value for residents
- ✓ **Delivering tangible outcomes** to residents by carrying out improvements in their local neighbourhoods and enhancing the quality of play areas and open spaces across the borough with the implementation of the Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch Strategy.
- ✓ **Bridging the Gap** supporting Chorley's most deprived communities in becoming economically active and self-sustaining through developing employment opportunities and providing targeted support to individuals through projects such as the Chorley Works unemployment programme
- ✓ **Listening and Engaging with residents** - The council remains focused on customer expectations and is committed to listening and engaging with residents through ongoing events and campaigns to see how best to meet their needs