

# **Chorley Council Annual Report** 2015/16



## Welcome to Chorley Council's annual report

This report presents Chorley Council's annual report for 2015/16. It provides an overview of activities and achievements over the last year, outlining the key steps that we have taken to ensure that we continue to deliver our vision and priorities.

**Our vision:** A proactive community leader, supporting the borough and all its residents to reach their full potential through working in partnership to deliver services that achieve the best outcome and protect vulnerable people



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



**Clean, safe and healthy communities**



**A strong local economy**



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

## The challenges in 2015/16

The council continues to operate in challenging conditions, with specific local concerns linked to population growth, health and deprivation. During 2015/16 the impact of government funding cuts became more acute in Chorley, with local partner organisations implementing drastic service changes across the borough in a bid to reduce costs. We also continue to see further changes to national policy on benefits and support for vulnerable people, creating uncertainty and instability for individuals and families.

The council's approach to proactively addressing these challenges and protecting vital services for local residents is set out in this report.

## Overview of 2015/16

### Statement from Cllr Bradley, Leader of Chorley Council and Executive Member for Economic Development and Partnerships

Our vision is to be a proactive community leader, working in partnership to deliver the best outcomes possible for our local communities and this report shows that this year, we've gone even further to achieving that ambition.

In 2015/16 more residents than ever before have 'made it happen' in their local communities, either through volunteering and giving their time as part of Chorley Time Credits; taking part in community clean up activity; or attending local events with their families such as Chorley Live and Picnic in the Park. Residents report that they have a better quality of life and say they 'feel healthier' as a result. Across the borough, play areas have been improved, new community facilities have been created and neighbourhoods have been transformed, all contributing to making Chorley a safer and more appealing place to live.

We continue to progress activity to strengthen the local economy and attract investment into the borough, encouraging businesses to 'Choose Chorley' so that we can create greater opportunities for local residents, resulting in 97 new jobs created this year. Families, individuals and young people have received targeted support to get back into employment and Chorley has a higher overall employment rate than Lancashire and nationally.

As an organisation we continually strive for better, more efficient ways of working to minimise the impact of budget cuts on residents and maintain vital services. We have accelerated work with partners to explore new, more integrated ways of working through the Chorley Public Service Reform Partnership, and we have changed the structure of the organisation to ensure that we are well equipped to face the challenges ahead.

### Statement from Cllr Wilson, Deputy Executive Leader, Executive Member (Resources)

Overall, the performance of the council remains strong despite the challenges we face. We've delivered against our key priorities and invested even more in our communities, whilst retaining a balanced budget.

Delivery of the Corporate Strategy has been very successful, with the majority of projects completed or continuing to deliver highly positive outcomes. Performance of the Corporate Strategy indicators and key service delivery measures has been excellent and in the final quarter of 2015/16 84% of corporate strategy indicators were performing above target. We continue to challenge underperformance and have seen sustained improvement in areas such as an increase in the overall employment rate, an increase in volunteering, as well as reducing customer dissatisfaction.

Planning for the future, building a strong local economy and enabling our communities will be important as we move forward into 2016/17, supported by further investment of £3.2million to achieve better outcomes for the people of Chorley.



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

### Long term outcomes

- 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 service

### What have we done this year to achieve this?

Work this year has seen more local residents being supported to engage and contribute towards improving their local community through neighbourhood working and community development activity. A successful events programme has seen thousands of people attending various attractions and activities across the year, engaging both local residents and encouraging visitors from further afield, raising the profile of Chorley as a destination to visit. More people are engaged with and are giving up their time to volunteer through our Time Credits scheme which continues to reward people for contributing towards their local communities. 2016 has seen 20% of Time Credits volunteers gaining work experience, 29% report having less need to go to the doctor and 67% said their level of contact has increased as a result of Time Credits. Much needed services providing advice and support for families with young children, vulnerable adults, older people, young people, and community safety have been supported through our grants and commissioning schemes.

- **86% of residents are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live**
- **72% of volunteers give their time at least once a week**
- **36% increase in the number of volunteering hours earned**

### Neighbourhood Working

24 Neighbourhood Working priorities were identified at neighbourhood area meetings for delivery in 2015 to improve and enhance community spaces. The work which has been undertaken this year has included:

- South East Parishes: Anderton Gateway, a scheme to design and construct planting and flowerbeds to the Anderton Southern Gateway to the borough
- Chorley Town West: Developed an Eaves Green tree management plan

- Eastern Parishes: Hoghton war memorial has been enhanced with additional seating and community areas

## Time Credits

The Chorley Time Credits programme continues to grow, supporting residents to volunteer and providing much needed capacity within communities. This year 77 additional community groups have been engaged in time banking to bring the total up to 267. A total of 511 new volunteers were recruited this year to bring the total of volunteers up to 1625, this year giving 42,452 hours of their time, and increasing volunteering hours by 36% compared to last year. Key outcomes to date include:

- 83% of Chorley members reported that Time Credits have helped to improve their quality of life; this is a 45% increase on last year.
- 42% said that they had not regularly given time before.
- 67% of respondents from Chorley said their level of social contact has increased as a result of time credits.

## Chorley Flower Show

The first ever Chorley Flower Show to place in 2015 and was a great success. The event attracted more than 10,000 visitors and 16 professional exhibitors, working in partnership with external groups such as Horticultural Exhibitors' Association (HEA) and Chorley and District Gardening Society. Since the show, Astley Hall has reported a significant increase in visitor numbers with some weekends are now seeing a 100 per cent increase in visitors.

## Other Events

We deliver an extensive programme of events spanning across the year to engage local residents, provide things to do for families and raise the profile of Chorley as a destination, encouraging visitors from further afield to boost the local economy.

This year some of the events we have delivered have included:

- **Christmas 2015** – Over 22,000 people attended various Christmas attractions organised including Astley illuminated, Santa Express and the festive ferris wheel (10,800 people took a ride on the wheel during Christmas 2015).
- **Chorley Grand Prix** – Thousands of people lined the streets of Chorley to see the event this year. The race weaved its way through villages including Rivington, Belmont, Withnell, Wheelton and Buckshaw before returning to the town centre.
- **Chorley Live** – The third Chorley live event was held this year and was a huge success with local performers playing at cafes, pubs, restaurants and shops. More than

7,000 people attended the event, a 50 per cent increase on last year, boosting the evening and night time visitor economy in the town centre.

- **Bonfire and Fireworks** - Chorley Council received sponsorship from Botany Bay and FI Real Estate Management to organise a bonfire event on Friday 6 November, which in previous years had been organised by the Chorley Carnival Group. Entry to the event was free with donations to the Mayor's charities, and was attended by approximately 5,000 people with numerous positive comments and feedback received.

## Grants and Commissioning

A total of £142,486 was awarded through the VCFS large commissioning process to ensure that funding is targeted to areas of greatest need in Chorley. The services commissioned provide vital support for families, vulnerable adults, older people, young people and community safety. In addition, £5,019 was also awarded this year through our small community funding process. The funding went to a total of nine VCFS organisations to help them deliver projects aimed at older people, young people, vulnerable adults, as well as those living with dementia and their carers.

This year, the council delivered a project to support local groups to access grant funding through the Grantfinder and Chorley4Community web platforms which enable users to search a range of funding sources both locally and nationally. Users can also opt to receive a weekly funding e-newsletter which includes information on new funding, updates, and deadlines. In 2015/16 the system was accessed a total of 1,215 times, with 33% of users accessing the system on more than one occasion. A recent user survey showed that the majority of those registered found the system useful and would be likely to recommend it.

## Digital Access and Inclusion

More people have been encouraged and enabled to get online this year through the provision of digital access sessions across the borough. A total of 56 individuals attended the supported sessions to equip them with the basic skills and tools to make the most of the internet.

The Digital Awareness Week in February aimed to promote activities which can be done online rather than by ringing or visiting the Council. We have also improved access to online facilities through providing new equipment to create access hubs in rural areas. A Digital Inclusion Officer has been appointed to support this work which will be continuing into 2016/17.



## A strong local economy

### Long term outcomes

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

### What have we done this year to achieve this?

As a result of work this year, more new businesses have been established in Chorley, more jobs have been created for local people and more residents have been supported into employment through our employment and grant schemes. 4.5% of young people are classed as 'not in employment education or training' which is better than Lancashire, and overall employment levels buck regional and national trends. The future of our town centre is exciting with low vacant shop levels, new retailers and the approval of plans to extend Market Walk. We've also taken a proactive approach to attracting visitors to Chorley, developing the 'Check Out Chorley' website to showcase all that Chorley has to offer.

- **3% increase in the number of new businesses established this year with support from the Council**
- **The overall employment rate in Chorley is 80.8%, this is better than both the North West (71.2%) and National (73.9%) average**
- **87 people completed the Chorley Works programme**
- **Over £1.5 million investment has been brought into the borough via our Choose**

### Inward Investment

Attracting investment and new business to Chorley is critical if we are to create new and more highly paid jobs that will sustain the local economy and enable better outcomes for all residents of Chorley.

This year we have been working harder than ever to help the Chorley business sector to thrive:

- Over £600,000 of investment has been generated by our Chorley BIG grant (Business Improvement for Growth) scheme to provide financial support for existing businesses with vision for growth and increasing employment levels.

The grant is aimed at creating jobs, with funding being available for capital investment projects such as new buildings, adapting existing premises or buying new plant or machinery.

- Over £1.5 million of investment has been brought into the borough via our Choose Chorley grant scheme, incentivising businesses looking to permanently relocate from outside the borough who intend to create at least 20 or more sustainable jobs within 18 months of establishing a base.
- We also provide support to new start-up businesses, and help those without significant capital available to them to create sustainable business. This year we have engaged with 138 new start-up clients and 97 new businesses have been established with support from Chorley Council.
- 84% of the new jobs created have been accessed by Chorley residents.

### **Choose Chorley for business**

This year, over 400 attendees have been encouraged to share contacts and business opportunities through 3 Choose Chorley Business Network Events. Inspiration and advice has been provided by a number of high profile speakers including Robert Craven of The Directors Centre, 3 Man Factory and Levi Roots of Reggae Reggae Sauce.

### **Market Walk extension**

Following extensive consultation and development planning during 2015, plans to extend Market Walk and to develop a seven unit retail and leisure development were approved by Development Control Committee and Full Council in September 2015. Work has continued this year towards securing 75% of lettings for the development.

The Market Walk development will improve the retail and leisure offer in the town centre, attracting national retailers and increasing visitors, creating growth and generating opportunities for the future.

### **Chorley Works**

The Chorley Works programme supports local people into sustainable employment and aims to target those most affected by the Welfare Reforms. Over the last year, 87 people have successfully completed the full Chorley Works placement of up to 8 weeks and have gone on to be offered paid permanent employment either with their placement provider or as a direct result of the work they had undertaken on their placement.



## **Young people, volunteering and training opportunities**

The council continues to support young people on their way to employment and learning new skills and by working in conjunction with Runshaw College we have employed six customer service apprentices in our customer service centre.

Our Runshaw College Employment Support project has continued to help young people into apprenticeships by reducing some of the barriers to apprentice take up. Through the scheme, 19 young people have been supported, with 11 of these young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The fund has been used to help towards costs additional to wages such as equipment, travel, work clothes and training fees.

By the end of March 2016 4.5% of 16 to 18 year olds were not in employment, education or training, this equates to a total of 153 young people, which is better than Lancashire at 5.1%.

## **Check Out Chorley**

The 'Check Out Chorley' website, developed by the council in 2015/16, aims to showcase the local area and show what Chorley has to offer to people of all ages. It provides an online tourist information centre for Chorley with all the information needed to plan a great day out in the borough.

The site was launched using an April fool's stunt via our council Facebook page which proved very successful, reaching 51,544 people, gaining 519 likes and 263 comments.

The site has continued to be promoted through sponsorship on Heart FM and billboard advertising in surrounding areas. So far, the site has been well received and had over 28,540 page views over the first three months and over 9,000 visitors.



## Clean, Safe and Healthy Communities

### Long term outcomes

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

### What have we done this year to achieve this?

This year more people have been encouraged to get active and stay active through a wide range of recreational activities, with more young people taking part in Get Up and Go and Free Swimming activities. We have continued to work towards providing access to quality, low cost housing and developing plans to meet future housing needs. We have worked hard to make sure our open spaces and streets are clean and safe and reduced the number of empty homes in the area. As a result, residents are more satisfied with parks and open spaces and street cleanliness, feelings of safety have also increased.

- **A 26% increase in the number of young people taking part in our Get Up and Go activities this year**
- **A 20% decrease in the number of long term empty properties in the borough**
- **More residents feel safe when outside in their local area at night 71% (previously 68.5%)**
- **An 11% increase in resident satisfaction with parks and open spaces**
- **A 5% increase in resident satisfaction with street cleanliness**

### Getting Active

We aim to provide a range of healthy activities and opportunities for people to engage with to get active, keep fit and have fun.

**Leisure Centres** - Our leisure centres play a big role in getting people healthy, active and staying active. This year our leisure centres had over 1 million visits.

**Get Up and Go!** -26,452 young people took part in Get Up and Go activities in 2015 which equates to enough people to fill Victory Park 7.5 times and would take 7 hours to do a head count!

## Free Swimming

The free swimming project allows young people aged 16 and under to swim for free during the school holidays. The scheme aims to provide a diversionary activity for young people, allowing them to access the sessions for free and encouraging them to take part in physical activity. Our 2015 scheme saw a 4% increase in attendance levels, with a total of 3,604 young people coming to the sessions.

## Affordable Homes

Chorley Council is committed to providing affordable homes across the borough, ensuring that residents have access to high quality, low cost, and suitable housing options. This year we delivered 85 homes which means that over a three year period, a total of 379 affordable homes were delivered.

## Extra Care Scheme

The Extra Care scheme will deliver 65 new beds for older people as part of a community hub close to the town centre, allowing them to maintain their independence and integrate with the community. Work this year has included submitting a planning application for the development and revising the financial model to reflect some of the national changes to the social sector rent policy.

## Parks and Open Spaces

The Play, open space and playing pitch strategy (2013-2018) was approved in September 2014 and outlines a 5 year action plan to protect, manage, and enhance our open space provision in Chorley. The second year has seen further developments with some highlights including:

**Destination play area** in Astley Park has been delivered and has received positive feedback from local people and the site is being well used.

**Rangleetts Recreation Ground** has seen developments which have included allotment sites, grass pitches; work on footpaths, drainage and lighting schemes and new CCTV being installed. The MUGA, ball court and Skate Park are now also complete and provide a vital asset for young people in the area.

## Empty Properties

Reducing the number of empty properties in the area is a council priority as they can cause a number of problems including increased risk of crime, encouraging anti-social behaviour and can be costly for a local authority to investigate. The number of empty properties in the borough has decreased over the last year from 210 to 167.

## **Crime and Antisocial behaviour**

Overall recorded crime has increased slightly this year, with 48.43 incidences per thousand population (46.42 in 2014/15). Incidences of burglary have also increased slightly at 13.74 per thousand population. Both statistics are however lower than the Lancashire averages of 65.8 (all crime) and 17.97 (burglary).

Antisocial behaviour incidences have also seen a slight increase at 43.83 per thousand population (38.81 in 2014/15). Again this is lower than the Lancashire average which is 56.1.

Our resident's survey was held in 2015, the results of this survey showed that:

- 92% of the population feel safe during the day
- 71% of the population feel safe at night



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

### Long term outcomes

- A council that consults and engages with residents
- An ambitious council that continually strives to improve
- Cohesive communities and around underlying areas

### What have we done this year to achieve this?

This year we engaged with residents through a postal and online survey, the results of which informed us that more of our residents feel the council provides value for money, are satisfied with the way the council runs things, with street cleanliness, and with parks and open spaces. More people are using our improved website to access services, and more of our customers are satisfied with the service they receive. Fewer people in Chorley are living in fuel poverty, and we have helped to alleviate debt problems by continuing to support the Credit Union. We have continued our work with partners, working together for the benefit of local people, to find new and innovative ways to provide services.

- Customer dissatisfaction has fallen by 4.2% over the last year
- An increase of 17.5% of residents feel the council provides value for money
- The Chorley Credit Union has had 287 new savers
- 77% of residents are satisfied with the way the council runs things

### Customer Satisfaction

The level of customer dissatisfaction at the end of 2015/16 was 17.1% against a target of 20%; our performance has improved significantly since 2014/15 with an overall reduction of 4.2% in customers dissatisfied. A number of initiatives have been introduced to sustain performance including ensuring that customers are responded to in a timely manner and working with contractors to ensure that they are meeting customer expectations.

### Improving online services

The council website has been improved to make it easier for residents to interact with us and complete key tasks or service requests online. The home page has been updated and the text based design replaced by icons. The new look website has been well received, gaining over 94,000 page views between December 15 and May 16 and there has been a 54.9% increase in the percentage of service requests completed online since 2014/15.

## **Chorley Public Service Reform**

Over the last year, the Chorley Public Service Reform Partnership has been working intensively to integrate and reconfigure services in Chorley to ensure the best outcomes for residents, with a focus on early intervention and prevention. Year one work streams include:

- Building community capacity, this piece of work aims to encourage people to help themselves, making them less likely to come into contact with public services unnecessarily.
- Ensuring teams across different organisations are better connected so that they can more effectively meet the needs of service users.
- Testing out the principles of collaborative partnership working with the aim of making 'one public service for Chorley'.

Year two will see the implementation of new structures and ways of working in line with wider changes to health and social care across Lancashire.

## **Credit Union**

The Chorley Credit Union enables people to save as well as offering low cost loans and support with banking as an ethical alternative to pay day loans or other less secure finance arrangements.

Over the last year 1,170 loans have been given out, with a value of more than £555,000, and 287 new savers have joined the Credit Union.

The Chorley Credit Union opened in August 2013 and since it commenced it has seen 3,010 loans given out, to the value of £1.6 million, as well as 1,474 new savers.

## **Chorley Youth Zone**

A planning application has now been submitted for a new Youth Zone in Chorley town centre following a public exhibition where local people could view the plans, speak with members of the project team and provide feedback.

Chorley Council are working with OnSide Youth Zones, which runs similar facilities across the Midlands and North West, the Arts Partnership and Lancashire County Council. Over 400 young people from across Chorley got involved in the branding of the proposed new facility.

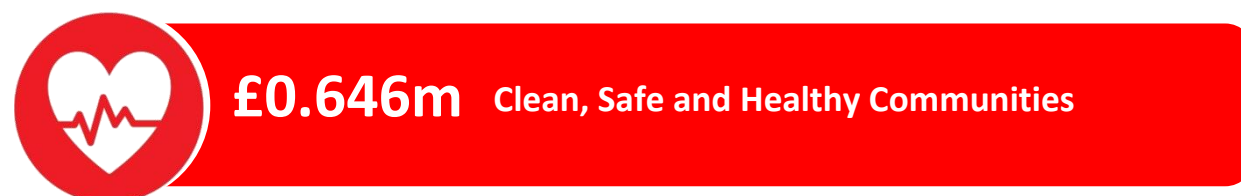
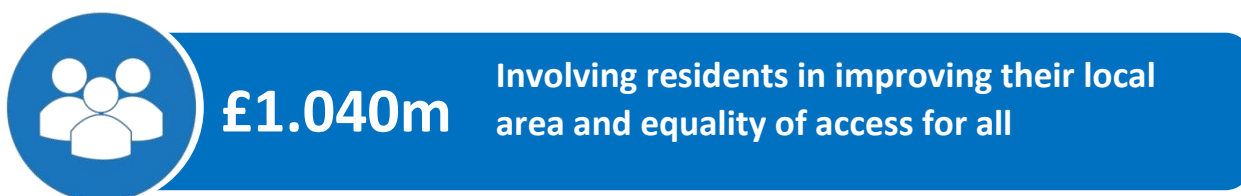
The aim is to provide a purpose-built facility for young people aged eight to 19 years and up to 25 for those with disabilities. There would be around 20 activities each night ranging from football, boxing, dancing and climbing to creative arts, music, drama and employability training, for just 50p per visit.

## Council Spending

In 2015/16 Chorley Council took the decision to once again freeze Council Tax, despite continuing large scale reductions in Central Government grants. At the same time the Council committed to new investments totalling £4.422m, with priorities for investment identified by residents including;

- Working with public service providers in the borough to make sure residents are getting the best deal possible
- Supporting businesses and improving the local economy
- Providing services for young and older people
- Improving the town centre
- Supporting safer communities
- Putting on events for families
- Improvements to play areas in the borough

In 2015/16 the £4.4 million investment benefitted the council's four main priority areas as follows:



## Our challenges 2016/17

Looking ahead to 2016/17, we recognise a number of challenges that we will need to address if we are to continue to deliver the right services for our residents. Some of these challenges include:

- **Changing population** - our population is predicted to increase by 14.9% between 2012 and 2037, with 25% of the population aged 60 or over by 2020.
- **Budget constraints** - the current Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts a total budget gap of £3 million to 2018/19.
- **Areas of deprivation** - whilst largely affluent, there are areas of deprivation across the borough with 4 neighbourhood areas identified in bottom 10% nationally for multiple deprivation.
- **Effective Partnership working** – local health services need to save £150 million over the next 5 years; this will demand transformational change for all public service organisations.

## How will we overcome these challenges?

### Transformation Strategy

- Supporting the council to achieve its ambitions and recommendations of the Future Governance Models for Chorley report
- Integrated Community Wellbeing
- Combined Authority
- Refreshing internal processes
- Making sure we can respond to future demands

### Public Service Reform

- Working to integrate and reconfigure public services in Chorley to provide the best outcomes for residents
- Making every contact count
- Focusing on prevention and early intervention to reduce demand
- Creating coordinated public services

### Inward Investment

- Attracting new business into Chorley
- Creating jobs in the local area
- Strengthening the local economy
- Improving the look and feel of the town centre and progressing Market Walk