

1. Please outline the services within the remit of your Directorate.

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation) Gary Hall

Joint working arrangements with South Ribble. Accountancy, efficiency and procurement, exchequer, internal audit, revenues and benefits.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) Lesley-Ann Fenton

Corporate policies and plans, performance management by working with Directorates and Audit Commission, project and program management (all projects on corporate strategy), Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) lead directorate, awards e.g. Beacon award currently going through, Local Area Agreement (working with LCC), Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) support, external funding officer (work with partners and groups to access funding), Communications (media, marketing, branding, internal communications (the loop etc), council's website.

Corporate Director (Business) Jane Meek

Building Control, Design and Heritage, Development Control, Economic Development and Tourism, Planning Policy, Regeneration, Strategic Housing and Land Charges

Corporate Director (People) Jamie Carson

Leisure, culture, leisure centres, community centres, community development, sport, arts, play, developing the voluntary, community and faith sector, customer facing aspects of parks and open spaces, including Yarrow Valley and Astley Park, nature trails, bereavement services, Customer Services, information management.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) Gary Hall on behalf of Ishbel Murray

Streetscene, environmental health, grounds maintenance, transport, waste and recycling contract, parking, toilets, mostly front line services.

Corporate Director of Governance Andrew Docherty

Legal, Democratic, Elections, Emergency Planning/Business Continuity, Civic Services, Mayoralty, Licensing. Until September 2007 Customer Services.

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology Tim Murphy

ICT procurement, desktop support, maintenance and enhancements to networks, servers, telephony, integration. Members' support on ICT. Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), disaster recovery, software application development and support, ICT Security, technical management of the web-site and intranet, technical support of the Planning application. Also, major input into operational projects e.g. Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

Corporate Director of Human Resources Lorraine Charlesworth

General Human Resources, training development, organisational development, occupational health (provided by Bolton MBC), payroll (provided by Blackpool)

Members requested general information for on what each Directorate does be prepared and distributed to all Members.

2. How many Full Time Equivalents are there in your Directorate?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

72.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

11.8

Corporate Director (Business)

50.176.

Corporate Director (People)

52

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

Just over 100, about ¼ of the staff at the council.

Corporate Director of Governance

27.33

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

12 & modern apprentice

Corporate Director of Human Resources

7 FTE and 1 modern apprentice.

3. What contribution has your directorate made to achieving efficiency gains?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

There has been a restructure, there are joint working arrangements with South Ribble for financial services, there is nothing else like this in the country at the moment. A new financial system has been implemented.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

There has been a restructure, the loop project generated £20,000 savings, working with ICT. The staff newsletter is now electronic (£20,000 savings), centralisations of communications, now have own graphic designer in house, do black and white copying where possible. There are lots of non-cashable savings as well.

Corporate Director (Business)

A restructure was undertaken recently and some teething problems were experienced. The benefits will kick in the next year. All targets have been achieved in improving the service. A good example is the e-planning project. This was driven from the top down to be more efficient and provide a better service for customers. There is a non-cashable and a cashable saving here as plans do not have to be copied, enveloped and sent out but uploaded to the internet instead. There is a forum where people who submit applications on a regular basis to submit them electronically.

Corporate Director (People)

For "Get Up and Go" the bookings are now done on line. The reduction in leaflets saved £6,000.00 in postage. The procurement of management services for leisure centres and the golf course have been cashable efficiency savings, as has the community management of community centres. There are more community centres to go through this process in the future.

Within customer services we are developing the platform for more efficiency gains with the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management system. Customer Services continue to undertake a great deal of business process reengineering when services transfer into the Contact Centre.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

The targets that have been set have been achieved in terms of efficiencies. It is mainly the front line service in this directorate, previously the council have concentrated on the back office services for efficiency gains. The new director will be looking at this with the department heads going forward. A good example is the different machines bought for grounds maintenance so grass could be cut in the wet, also mini sweepers enabling a wider area to be covered. The transfer of the front facing element of the service made significant efficiency savings due to the business process reengineering undertaken. There was a discussion regarding morale of staff. It was noted that pay and conditions were consolidated so the hours are longer in the summer and shorter in winter.

Corporate Director of Governance

A restructure undertaken a few years ago trimmed down the team. Electronic systems have been implemented for elections, including telephone and internet electoral registration saving postage costs and officer time. The modern.gov system for committee administration has resulted in less post and printing, huge time saving in production and publication to the web. Many smaller savings both cashable and non cashable have been made across the Directorate.

Customer Services continue to undertake a great deal of business process reengineering when services transfer into the Contact Centre.

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

The directorate has an involvement in many of the projects that have delivered efficiencies both at a Directorate level and corporately. Examples include the ePlanning system, the web-site redesign, the development of self-service facilities and the implementation of CRM. In terms of our own targets, the Directorate has been restructured and the headcount reduced. We have also identified new technologies such as thin client technology that will deliver savings. In addition, the Directorate took the opportunity to work with South Ribble to purchase a new telephone system. This is expected to deliver significant savings. We have also purchased software to provide an in-house integration capability that would otherwise have resulted in greater external costs.

The team is small considering the size of the authority, this can cause difficulties with specialities, efforts are made not to have just one person with knowledge. The council has a limited budget for specialists e.g. mobile working. These support skills are then transferred over to our staff.

Corporate Director of Human Resources

A restructure within the Directorate effective from the 1st January 2008 will achieve cashable efficiencies in addition to the efficiencies gained by having a fit for purpose structure with a multi skilled team that is able to adapt to the changing needs and priorities of the Authority.

By using the council's websites applications can be filled in and submitted on-line, reducing the cost of photocopying and postage, The size of adverts has been reduced to a teaser reducing advertising costs, although for hard to recruit positions e.g. planners, full-page adverts have been used in professional publications

Savings achieved are not always cashable, the majority of policies go through "staff matters" and the Joint Consultative Committee that fosters good industrial relations, and then elected members - policies are more effective with feedback with staff. The council was tenth in the Times best council to work for. After 8 months sickness absence stood at 5 days which is really good against the target.

A top 50 managers event is held every 6 weeks to increase communication.

The current occupational health contract has been heavily monitored throughout the year and significant efficiency savings have been achieved.

4. What areas of improved efficiency have you targeted for the future?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

Corporately there is a need to formalise plans in this area. Work is being undertaken on service transformation and improving the customer experience for local people. The Council has been involved in national work on “business architecture” and the infrastructure to deliver this is now in place. There is more work to be done on how people see the organisation as a whole, but this is similar to the national trend.

The Government have set out areas of potential gains for the future, including procurement and collaboration. Chorley have already done so much on efficiencies and other organisations, who have done less, will have more meat on the bone to lose. Chorley is already a lean mean machine!

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

Looking at the replacement of our performance management software system for a cheaper alternative, either an in-house solution or one where licences are cheaper. Given the majority of the budget are staffing costs, income generation is the main means of off-setting costs. We have generated income this year by providing policy & performance support to Blackpool Borough Council. Currently looking at where we could sell time, expertise etc to partners e.g. use a little of our branding officer’s time during purdah to design documents for partners.

Corporate Director (Business)

There will be a continuation of joint working on the Local Development Framework (LDF) and exploration of other areas for joint working e.g. economic development.

There is a need for professional people within the directorate; it would have a detrimental effect on the service if costs were reduced.

The housing allocation team will be back in house soon, we have the motivation to provide the service in a cost effective way.

Corporate Director (People)

We will be looking to drive out efficiency savings as more services are brought into the CRM system. We will also continue to transfer assets into Community Management.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

The new Director will cast a fresh pair of eyes over the directorate when she starts. A Value For Money review is being undertaken at the moment. There are areas where efficiencies can be made e.g. enforcement by bringing functions together (environmental health and licensing).

There are opportunities through considering how do we do business and reducing non added value tasks. Absence management and way vehicles are procured needs to be reviewed. There is potential for SMS text messages to confirm that jobs have been completed.

It is a member decision whether reinvest money in services or claim them as efficiency savings.

Corporate Director of Governance

As part of a review of vehicles there is no longer a deputy mayoral car or van for civics, we have proposals for a less grand, more environmentally friendly mayoral car, ongoing distribution list reviews will further reduce paper copies of committee papers, the fees for the Lancastrian have just been increased (for the first time in 12 years), there is potential for licensing to be transferred into Neighbourhoods, parish elections could no longer be subsidised. It was suggested that the Lancastrian be a future scrutiny inquiry topic.

Schedule of Responses – Efficiency Gains Scrutiny Inquiry

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

Mobile working, Telephony, Thin Client, software licences, in future directorates will be billed directly for telephone costs increasing accountability.

Server virtualisation (day-to-day usage of servers is not to capacity allowing them to be shared whilst capacity is retained for big jobs).

In virtual servers, capacity can be swapped around even allowing unused server capacity to be powered down reducing energy usage. Virtual servers can reduce the number of physical servers required thereby reducing maintenance costs).

Integration between software packages will result in major efficiencies. Also, migrating customers onto cheaper channels e.g. self service on the website. Disaster recovery may be shared with other local authorities. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) customers will be able to track queries & advisors will have records of contact with the council.

Printing in offices can be doubled sided, if requests come in for deskjet printers they are referred to the Director to justify, as ink is costly.

A suggestion was made to communicate that double sided printing is available and to aim to reduce desk jet printers in offices.

Storage devices will be considered jointly with West Lancs and Preston.

The member group on technology issues could reinstated, there is a need to consider member requirements and training. Answerphone facilities can be provided for Members home telephones if they require them. Members mini websites should be rolled out in the new municipal year.

Corporate Director of Human Resources

The website “jobs go public” will be used shortly meaning that advertising in publications will be reduced. Application forms will be viewed electronically and won't be printed it off.

A scanner had been purchased and the department was investigating scanning in personal files to reduce storage.

A HR information system is planned to allow staff to self serve for absence information and their manager to interrogate the system etc.

A management development programme will be developed with an emphasis on mentoring, less formal training, including member training.

Officers recently had a day at BNFL regarding workplace listeners, with 35 people from all over the site and shifts who had been well trained. We came back with some really good ideas, are working on a well-being policy and workplace listeners will be included in this.

Following a review of the Occupational Health contract a new provider will deliver the service from 1st April 2008.

5. Is there any scope for joint working within your Directorate?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

There will be lots of opportunities to work with the public sector and other Local Authorities, in particular joint working on back office services. The Council could provide services for other organisations, for example, the current joint working arrangements with South Ribble for financial services. There is nothing else like this in the country at the moment.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

We are pursuing the possibility of undertaking a statutory consultation exercise with local residents jointly with our neighbouring District authorities and LCC in autumn of 2008. This should be cheaper than doing it individually. Similarly there is potential for joint work on equality and diversity and research but limited in terms of strategic policy and performance.

Corporate Director (Business)

Ongoing projects are discussed at the directorate management team meetings - this helps communication with the people who need to know about things.

As part of the re-structure we set up a Director wide admin team which enabled us to provide efficiencies across the Directorate and we will continue to develop this.

There is potential for joint working between regeneration and economic development.

There is scope for joint working with external organisations such as parish councils, although systems need to be in place to manage the process and make sure it's delivered.

Corporate Director (People)

There are regular meetings with other local authorities on joint working in relation to the Contact Centre partnership.

For the golf and leisure centre contracts it is built in the contract to be self-monitoring with penalties for reductions in performance etc.

There is potential for additional community management of community centres.

There are systems for feedback on the parks between People and Neighbourhoods Directorate.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

We have to remember the service is local and to match the requirements of the service to the benefits of joint working. E.g. local knowledge is not needed for food testing, whereas for grounds and street cleansing a locally delivered is to be preferred.

There are opportunities to combine the use of assets e.g. the council could use another depot instead of having our own depot or having a joint management infrastructure.

The results of the Value For Money review will be considered and all opportunities considered. We could perhaps ask the parish councils to maintain the green spaces instead of us and need to engage with the parishes on some of these issues. These are not easy questions to ask and answer. Whatever system we set up there is a need to manage the process and make sure it's delivered.

Corporate Director of Governance

Yes and we already do so. Across the Directorate much specialist training is provided on a joint basis with other Authorities at low or sometimes no cost. Legal services use colleagues from neighbouring Councils to handle work at peak times and "lead adviser" arrangements operate on certain joint projects. Elections publicity has been arranged jointly with two other Councils. Business Continuity training has been provided for local businesses in conjunction with the police and another Council. The possibility of further joint work around the new ethical standards regime is currently being explored.

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

We already work jointly on a number of projects and are exploring new areas as well. We work very closely with LCC ICT Services in respect of the Contact Centre and have just completed a joint procurement exercise with South Ribble for a new telephony system. I am currently discussing joint working around a new storage project with Preston and West Lancs. and have also begun discussions with LCC around disaster recovery arrangements that could be beneficial to the Council. I am aware of the work that the NWCE is carrying out around software licensing and although it is too late for us this year, we will be monitoring the situation ready for renewals next year.

Corporate Director of Human Resources

Meetings are ongoing with West Lancashire BC and South Ribble BC Human Resources Managers about joint working on policies, work areas and human resources generally. This is an agreement with West Lancashire regarding policy development in place currently.

Chorley is leading on the HR shared services project looking at opportunities for joint working across all the Lancashire authorities

As part of this the majority of authorities are looking at the joint procurement and advertising on a Lancashire portal Website that would achieve efficiency gains, whilst broadening the advertising opportunity for Lancashire.

6. How do you manage and improve efficiency within your directorate and how does it link with your Business Improvement plan and the corporate strategy?

The answer was generally the same for all Directors:

Within the business improvement plan there is a section on Value For Money

There are weekly departmental management team meetings that look at the business improvement plan as part of the meeting.

Performance is monitored by Policy and Performance, this is reported to Overview and Scrutiny.

7. What is your budget and what are the main heads of expenditure?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

£1726,00.00.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

600k. Staff, consultancy, statutory consultation, communications and marketing.

Corporate Director (Business)

2,859,940. Main is for dc fees. Housing is a growing budget area.

Corporate Director (People)

£1,950,000.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

The directorate has the biggest spend area in the council of 5 million. 2.7 million is staff, 2.3 million is contracts.

Corporate Director of Governance

£1.6m. The budget has little flexibility. The main costs are staff, members allowances, mayoralty, building costs and rates.

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

The forecast cash outturn budget for 2008/9 is £1,019,000. The main heads are staff and goods and services.

Corporate Director of Human Resources

£494,00. Staffing, recruitment and training.

8. How do you ensure that any efficiency gains you achieve are corporately collected and reported?

The answer was generally the same for all Directors:

There is a process to collect information organised by the business transformation team and the accountants resulting in the forward and backward looking statements.

Efficiency gains can come up unexpectedly, e.g. checking telephone and internet electoral registration saved £1,500 on overtime costs as less checking was required. There is a need to capture these as they can be forgotten when officers are busy doing the day job.

It is difficult when reporting non-cashable savings to accurately work out a cost for them.

9. What measures have you taken to ensure that effective procurement practice is in place within your directorate and can you give us examples of this in practice?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

The new financial system is a good example. Procurement is within this directorate.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

There is limited procurement, however when it takes place the main area is consultancy, support, citizen's panel tendering and commissioning statutory surveys. All such procurements tend to go through a tender process as they are over the minimum threshold.

Corporate Director (Business)

Managers are well versed in the Council Procurement Rules and work with the procurement team. e.g. Nature Reserve Maintenance Contract, Chorley Town Centre Design Strategy, Big Wood Reservoir Remedial Work. There was a waiver relating to the Buckshaw Village station as the contract needed to be with network rail.

Corporate Director (People)

Golf course: the lease is for 25 years with equivalent budgeted income being received plus capital improvements to the course. The numbers of people using the facility increased by 18% in first year, there will be new clubhouse facilities which will attract weddings etc.
Leisure contract: has gone into third of a 15 year deal, the longer contract period drives down the costs.
Astley Park: market testing is underway for expressions of interest with commercial and voluntary faith groups. Joint working with Lisieux Hall here whilst improving the facility. There will also be a lease for the catering facility.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

There is a corporate priority relating to sustainable purchase and we need to concentrate on this moving forward, thinking about the carbon footprint etc.
New waste contract – we have learnt from the previous contract etc cleaning of the toilets and graffiti removal.

Corporate Director of Governance

We follow the contract procedure rules and are aware of the possibilities to make savings by questioning and amalgamating expenditure. We have very few significant contracts though and, where we do have some specific issues – for example the election printing market is very small and quality is absolutely key, so opportunities for procurement savings here are few.

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

Procedure rules on procurement are adhered to and the team works with the procurement officer.
Citrix / Thin Client project is a huge project replacing computers with a more green option. A specialist did the proof of concept; the skills have now been transferred over to the team. Work has been undertaken with Human Resources on training. The Directorate uses Framework agreements where possible.
Telephony contract: money has been saved on procurement by working jointly with South Ribble. Specialists were also jointly procured to advise on specification. Joint arrangements will be explored where there are potential benefits e.g. business continuity.

Schedule of Responses – Efficiency Gains Scrutiny Inquiry

Corporate Director of Human Resources

Health & Safety is delivered by Bolton MBC and is now overseen by audit.

Occupational Health is currently delivered by Bolton MBC but will soon be delivered by Chorley Hospital on a pay as go basis. This means reduced travelling time and service from designated doctors and nurses, this should save £5,000 this year.

Eye screening is now have arranged with an optician locally.

Hospital will do proactive work including group sessions including stress management.

Although the Occupational Health provision is not currently open to Members it is suggested that this be recommended for consideration by the Councils Remuneration Panel

A Human Resources system will be purchased this year. Blackpool is used on a rolling 12 month basis, however this will be reviewed in light of the proposed procurement of the HR information system with a possibility for joint working with South Ribble Borough Council.

The training budget has reduced this year as with the new structure more training will be delivered in-house.

Data Protection is being looked at closely to make sure the council adheres to the regulations.

10. The use of the absence management policy can lead to efficiencies. Is the policy working in your Directorate?

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

The policy is enforced.

Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)

This year the figures are really good. The policy is enforced.

Corporate Director (Business)

The Directorate has an excellent sickness record. It is more of an issue to get people to go home when they are sick!

Corporate Director (People)

Each directorate has a monthly breakdown showing the sickness. Managers have had training on the policy. The policy is working well.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

There are elements where the policy does work and doesn't. The age profile, injuries and working outside need to be taken into account. It is not possible to have a 1 size fits all policy on absence management. Occupation health and physiotherapy are particularly important here.

Corporate Director of Governance

In relatively small teams the figures can be misleading and hide some of the real picture. Last year sickness levels were well above average because of a few people with long term sickness problems. At the same time Democratic Services received a team award for the least amount of sickness absence in the council. The sickness policy is enforced though and good use has been made of occupation health and physiotherapy to keep people in work.

Corporate Director of Information and Communication Technology

The policy has been used and has worked, it helps both the people who are off and those at work.

Corporate Director of Human Resources

The policy is used on every occasion of sickness within the Directorate and is working well with a sickness figure of less than 1 day per person up to the end of January.

(The following questions were asked of individual Directors)

Assistant Chief Executive (Business and Transformation)

What is your view on the council's approach to achieving the efficiency targets set for the council as part of the 04 Spending Review?

The approach has been strategic and very successful. The Council has achieved the targets a year in advance. Savings have been made from changing the structure of the organisation and if these are analysed the majority of savings have not been in public facing areas but the back office - performance figures have improved showing that there has been no reduction in service provision. Cashable and non-cashable savings have been achieved with concentration on cashable savings. Probably are more non-cashable savings but judgement has to be made on the time required to calculate these. The organisation has a culture of efficiency - not all councils have this culture.

The figures indicate the Council has been particularly successful under the transactional efficiency gains category. How have these gains have been achieved?

The Council had a three pronged approach: procurement, corporate services and transactions. In 2004 work was undertaken in the transactional side by utilising technology to gain cashable efficiencies e.g. new financial system, also strengthening sickness absence management (non-cashable efficiency).

Key is re-engineering business processes to release both cashable and non-cashable savings, e.g. the loop, making investment work harder and get more for the same money e.g. outsourcing the golf course to Glendale and property services to Liberata.

The building blocks are in place to enable efficiencies to be made in the Contact Centre, in procurement, business improvement and performance advisors to support Directors in achieving efficiencies.

The work and success on efficiency has been recognised by the Audit Commission as Chorley will be a case study on efficiency and Value for Money.

Has improving efficiency had an impact on front-line services and have financial gains made in efficiency been re-invested in front line service?

Under the 2007 review the general message is that the government has put cash in to health and education, not Districts. Councils are capped on council tax rises so efficiency gains are used to balance the budget. Cashable efficiency savings have put back into front line services.

The budget is 65% salary costs. Investment has been made in high demand areas services such as recycling, as a Council we want to do well and exceed targets set. The costs of delivering the Revenues and Benefits service is complicated, the majority is provided through a subsidy but this is capped.

What arrangements are in place to ensure that the efficiency gains are monitored, reported, robust and adhere to the efficiency guidance?

Reporting mechanisms have improved over last 18 months. There are quarterly reports on performance indicators to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Panel, within this is a section on Value For Money and efficiency. There is potential to increase the information provided to the Executive Cabinet.

Are there any areas of the council where anticipated gains have not been made and if so why not?

It was anticipated that savings would be made in Human Resources, however Job Evaluation took longer than anticipated. The Directorate has now been restructured and although the target won't be made for 07/08 efficiency savings will be on track for 08/09.

How confident are you that the council will achieve the demands for efficiency/value for money delivery in the spending review 07 review period?

The target driving the efficiency and Value For Money agenda is balancing the budget not the government targets. It is important to get building blocks right to move forward on Value For Money and other areas within assessments.

The 08 Use of Resources assessment will be changed focussing on outcomes rather than tasks. It has been a conscious decision to concentrate on Value For Money up to this point. E.g. the golf course at Duxbury, the Council secured two million pounds investment in the course and usage has increased. Also, the outsourcing of property services to Liberata. Expertise in specialised areas means the Council is getting more for the money invested whilst tapping into the skills set of the partner. Another benefit of outsourcing certain services is the transfer of risk, for example routine maintenance is carried out for a fixed price.

The Council will look at every opportunity for efficiencies through outsourcing or joint working. When procuring services quotes will be assessed on more than price, the cheapest quote is not always the best. For large projects non-cashable savings will be calculated.

Corporate Director (Business)

There have been developments on the Council's website with the Planning Portal. Has this produced efficiency savings?

Yes, but they can be difficult to measure.

Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)

We understand that there will be significant efficiency savings as a result of the mobile working project. How is the project progressing?

The use of technology is being reviewed as part of the Value For Money review so these things will be picked up. An intelligence management system being planned.

Corporate Director – ICT

What impact do you think improving our ICT platform has had on achieving efficiency gains in recent years?

The development of the Council's technology infrastructure has been fundamental to the success of the efficiency programme. 5 years ago the Council began its investment with the implementation of a state of the art inter-building network and that investment has been maintained through both government grant funding and our own resources. A significant proportion of the efficiency savings delivered in recent years have their roots in business change facilitated by technology – the contact centre, on-line flexi-time, the Loop, electronic document management are examples of this. Without doubt, these improvements would not have been possible without the investment.

Corporate Director – Human Resources

Substantial efficiency savings have been made through reduction of the establishment in recent years. What sort of impact has that had on staff?

There has been lots of consultation and communication, some staff took voluntary severance. Staff were ring fenced and interviewed. Compulsory redundancy was kept to a minimum.

Job Evaluation is nearly completed, this has impacted on morale although information has continued to be communicated to demonstrate fairness and transparency.

Sickness absence levels are low. Staff can see the changes for the better and this was highlighted when they voted Chorley to be the 10th best Council to work for in the Times awards.

The Chief Executive holds awards annually, including awards for innovation, attendance etc.

Corporate Director – People

How do you see the Contact Centre contributing to the council's future efficiency gains targets?

Customer Services now have the platform to deliver efficiency gains by dealing with more queries at first point of contact. There is more work to do here with potential gains to be made by working with partners, including LCC, PCT. These may be gains for partners. Improved working is required to reduce the cost of contact centre in response to Varney.

The customer access strategy is being updated, work is needed on tracking service failure, this is built in to the new waste contract to reduce the number of calls received.

Plans are in place to deliver a proactive service through customer profiling.

The performance indicators shows satisfaction is high, the abandon rate is also a good measure. The aim is now a 5% abandon rate which is a challenging target that we are meeting.

When services are transferred into the Contact Centre there can be fluctuations in call numbers - this is managed better now.

Corporate Procurement and Partnerships Manager Janet Hinds

1. Please could you outline the responsibilities within your role?

Raising profile of procurement: so officers understand importance of procurement. The contracts procedure rules have been reviewed, guidance produced and training given.

Corporate procurement of goods and services e.g. energy, stationery, mobile phones. More recently the telephony contract in conjunction with ICT. There has been an increased involvement from directorates.

Provision of advice and support in procurements within directorates, also play a major role in some of the larger procurements like Property.

Monitoring of key partnerships and contract management, including sports and leisure, property etc to monitor the effectiveness and governance of key partnerships. This was picked up in a use of resources assessment that this area needed to be strengthened.

2. What contribution have corporate procurement made to the council's efficiency savings in the period covered by the 04 Spending Review.

IDeA Procurement Challenge in March 2006 said "The Team commend the council on their excellent progress." It is estimated that the savings are half a million.

3. Can you broadly tell us how these are made up and give us some more detail on the more notable examples?

Contact Centre: £129,000 in total, with £43,000 per year.

Property: £117K per year commencing in July 2007 (7 year contract). The procurement process was managed and now the contract management is within corporate procurement.

Insurance: £101,000 per year commencing in March 07 (10 year contract). Following a full European Union negotiated procedure, market timing and review of policies.

Cleaning of Public Conveniences: £18,600. New Contract from May 07.

Process Savings: £66,000 reduction in corporate support costs as a result of new system (£48k in 04/05 and £18k in 05/06).

Recycling Vehicles: £51,910 Full EU tender, which realised much better prices than market testing (Oct 04) and enabled them to reconsider service and procure another vehicle

Also, consolidated invoicing programme, photocopiers/printers, kerbside recycling bags and Christmas lighting.

4. The efficiency agenda continues as part of the CSR07 review. What future contribution do you feel corporate procurement can make to securing future efficiency gains?

There are several key procurements including the main waste contract due for renewal April 2009. Tenders are out this month.

Telephony system: we have worked with South Ribble Borough Council and invited tenders jointly with both Councils buying a similar system. Chorley BC provided the procurement support was provided for both Councils and South Ribble provided legal support for both Councils. We have also shared the cost of consultants in the development of the specification, instead of both paying

consultants fees. The new telephony system itself is estimated to save approximately £200,000 over a 7 yr life.

Postal Project: All 2nd class mail will now be handled by TNT from the Union Street Offices, with 1st class mail remaining with Royal Mail. This will save approximately £8,000 per year.

Shared Services project with South Ribble: this should come to fruition later this year. Chorley will be the host authority and will be providing a procurement service for South Ribble.

Another key area in the next few months is to make progress on and embed across the authority, best practice and initiatives for sustainable procurement, procuring from the third sector, and equality and diversity in procurement, all of which are important factors in the government's transformational agenda.

CSR07 will present Chorley with a very difficult challenge over the next 3 years as we are ahead of the game. There is an expectancy that a large proportion of the savings will come from smarter procurement of the top spend categories. These are identified in the CSR 07 report and include spend on construction of roads and buildings and adult social care - expenditure that is not available to districts like Chorley. For Chorley, the savings will come from focusing on strategic service areas, which is part of the vision for business transformation. The infrastructure is in place but it will be extremely difficult to make 3% over the 3 years.

Customer Access Officer Kris Boardman

1. Please could you outline the responsibilities within your role?

The role is a newly created role and includes the design, development and delivery of a customer access strategy, to understand our customer groups (especially minority and hard to reach customers) and their needs. I also provide assistance to other council departments in measuring customer satisfaction and gathering customer insight.

I am project manager on a project that has received funding from central government. It examines customer needs and related needs to assist customer service advisors in delivering with a range of appropriate services to the customer regardless of who the provider is. The project is still in its early stages.

I feed into Value For Money reviews from a customer satisfaction aspect and examine any opportunities that may present themselves from central government that will enhance the services we offer.

2. Can you tell us what contribution the creation of the Contact Centre has made to delivering efficiency savings for the council?

For financial year 04/05 through to 06/07 efficiency savings of £150,200 can be claimed.

For backward looking statements for 04/05 and 05/06 efficiency savings amount to £87,200 are made up of:

Non-Cashable savings of £17,200 (£13,800 for transferring first point of contact for environmental services, public space services and licensing to the OSS) and £3,400 (for transfer of first point of contact for planning and environmental services to OSS).

Cashable savings of £70,000 made up of £27,000 (due to reduction of 1.5 FTE posts following closure of the cash office at Union street) and £43,000 (saved through the contact centre partnership).

The contact centre continues to make efficiencies for example the corporate director of business transformation has estimated to provide a front line enquiry service would cost £40,000 for development and building control (in 07/08). Through a restructure it has been agreed a £20,000

transfer for the service to be provided in customer services and a £20,000 efficiency gain will be reflected in the 07/08 forward looking statements.

3. A Procurement saving of £300,000 has been identified through the Shared Services Contact Centre Partnership. Is this still a justifiable efficiency gain for the council for the remaining 4 partnership years?

The costs savings can still be claimed as despite recent delays in the Customer Relationship Management system implementation. If we were to go it alone we would have already have incurred the up front capital investment of £414,200 plus £250,586 in software plus on going maintenance costs.

4. We are aware that implementation of the Customer Relationship Management system is currently underway. Can you please update us on progress and tell us what efficiency gains you think will be achieved through its implementation?

Implementation is well under way training has begun and there is a revised go live date of the 26th March. It is important for members to note implementing a CRM system on its own will not yield any efficiency savings. When individual services are integrated within the CRM system business processes can then be re-engineered and efficiency savings identified retrospectively.

During the first phase of CRM implementation the focus is on waste management as this is a high volume service. The project team have undertaken some re-engineering of business processes. For example: a number of business processes that were undertaken in the back office have now been transferred to the contractor. This will result in 38% of an FTE time being saved.

This phase will also see the implementation of SMS text messaging facilities. This opens up a new, lower cost channel for citizens to access council services. We are unable to accurately predict the amount of cost savings this will generate as take up for this service will ramp up over time. It is thought any cost savings will be non – cashable for this initiative.

5. We understand that there is significant variation in the different methods of communicating with the council. Can you elaborate on this issue and tell us what plans there are for future channel optimisation.

Channel Optimisation is about ensuring citizens contact us by the most appropriate channel given their individual circumstances.

We are not proposing any communication channels are shut down or customers are being forced to contact the council for certain services through certain channels. However we want to ensure citizens are using and encouraged to use the most suitable channels for their individual circumstances.

Customers are contacting us regularly enquiring about transactions that could be undertaken via self-service that we have not yet implemented. These are the type of customers who on contact we would direct to self service channels (if implemented) and would probably want to transact with us using this channel in the future for a number of transactions.

To help facilitate channel optimisation we are making services which the contact centre and one stop shop offer (and will continue to offer) where appropriate these services will be online.

6. Are there plans to deliver services for other partner organisations? Is there potential to generate income from this approach as well as improve the service to the customer?

There is one service that the contact centre currently delivers for an external organisation. We currently answer housing repair calls for Chorley Community Housing (CCH) and on a Wednesday morning when CCH have training sessions we deal with the whole range of CCH calls. As part of the contract the council do receive an income from CCH for providing this service.

We have been selected (with South Ribble Borough Council), to pilot a face-to-face pilot service with Lancashire County Council, following a successful trial last year. An officer from LCC will be

based in the OSS on a Monday and Tuesday every week for the next 3 months. This has provided another access channel for our citizen to access LCC services.

As part of the pilot the Council is looking into a pilot where initial enquiry telephone calls for LCC Highways enquiries would be taken by the Council and reported to LCC Highways department using their web based reporting system. The council will receive no income for providing this service, but it will enhance the overall customer experience, as the customer is not 'handed off' to another government department. This is very much in its infancy at this stage and nothing has been implemented.

7. How will the Council measure the number of times members of the public contact the Council to resolve an issue/request for service?

The Audit Commission have recently released a new national indicator which all authorities must measure the number of times a member of the public contacts us to resolve an issue/request for service. The measurement for number of contacts per resolved request is:

Total number of customer contacts

Total number of resolved customer requests

The lower the figure, the better the performance.

We will be able to measure this via the CRM system with the limited data it will hold by the Audit Commission deadline for waste management. The Audit Commission recognise difficultly councils without a CRM system in place will have in measuring this, which Chorley Council is one of. The Audit Commission has left measurement open to some interpretation and potential negotiation.

8. According to the Varney report there should be a reduction of 25% in running costs for contact centres in the future. Do you think this is a realistic target for Chorley?

We are aware of the contents of the Varney report and the fact that these reductions are thought to be achievable by 2010/2011.

At the present moment we are not in a position to say if these cost savings are realistic. As already outlined the contact centre has already delivered significant cost savings to the organisation and it is looking likely the CRM system roll out will deliver more efficiencies. However it is not known if the contact centre will be able to deliver the efficiencies outlined in the Varney report at this time – especially as we have more services currently in the pipeline to migrate into the contact centre.

External auditor Mike Thomas

1. Please could you outline the responsibilities within your role?

I have two roles, district auditor and inspection role.

As the district auditor I give an opinion on the council's accounts and use of resources/Value For Money. This includes a view on where we are currently and the direction of travel.

As a relationship manager I have an inspection role for Comprehensive Performance Assessment and undertake that role across Lancashire and for various local authorities.

2. How do you feel Chorley Council has performed in relation to the delivery of its efficiency targets set for the 04 Spending Review period compared with other Local Authorities?

We don't specifically report on targets set by Chorley, just what has been achieved. The Audit Commission and the Government didn't want to be set on numbers, it's more about do you know what you want to achieve, have you put in place the arrangements and where are you on what it costs to deliver services. There needs to be a culture within the organisation to continuously improve. The wider element is to look at the arrangements and on that Chorley have scored 4.

When changes are made to improve there is a time lag to demonstrate that improvement. Chorley has progressed well and is continuously improving. There is a constant challenge to deliver services in a more efficient way and robust performance management.

Schedule of Responses – Efficiency Gains Scrutiny Inquiry

There are different elements to use of resources, including comparison of cost and performance with other local authorities and customer satisfaction. It is difficult to obtain customer satisfaction information.

Work undertaken in Chorley on partnerships and outsourcing has produced efficiency savings whilst improving the service.

Before the efficiency targets were set out efficiency was seen as an important challenge. CPA and BVPI have challenged and pushed for improvements. There will be a different perspective on performance indicators going forward and spending review will demand continual improvements. There will be indicators through the local area agreements and it is thought that the relevant performance indicators will still be collected.

It is important for members and employees to be focussed on efficiency.

3. Are there any efficiency areas where you feel we might have had a greater focus on?

Last year there were a few things and these have been responded to. The self-assessment completed by Chorley has been hailed as best practice. There is nothing specific I can suggest, the culture and awareness shows in the better scoring authorities like Chorley. The corporate strategy - plan on a page is a good example of the council reacting to a changing world, the plan is reviewed on a regular basis. Options for the delivery of services are regularly considered.

A few years ago local authorities didn't seek out best practice but this has now changed. It is difficult to compare districts and this is a challenge for the Audit Commission. Local authorities have chosen to deliver services such as waste collection differently, weekly, fortnightly etc. There may be political decisions and policy reasons for some of these differences. The key point is evidencing cost information about what the council does. CIPFA do request standard accounting returns, but even these can be interpreted in different ways with recharges being done in different ways.

4. What are your views on the targets set by the Government for the CSR07 spending review period?

The efficiency agenda is being challenged on, the treasury are saying savings need to be made. It is a political agenda so it is difficult to comment on really. There is a national efficiency strategy that will be received by local authorities that Donna Hall and Lesley-Ann are involved in.

The challenge is how to continually make efficiencies savings whilst maintaining the service delivery to the customer. Chorley is well along the road and this should be taken into account going forward.

In the next three years there may be a general election, this may have a bearing on the future. This is public money and we ought to be challenging how the money is spent.

5. How would you assess Chorley's readiness to deliver against these targets?

The targets are set at a national level, it is anticipated that there will be a focus on areas that aren't improving, such as health, decent homes and education.

If authorities can prove they have been prudent, have had good scores from audit commission, have good performance indicator statistics and have good customer satisfaction scores it can be questioned what further could be done.

Value For Money is not just about money it's about providing a better service.