



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge  
18-20 June 2024

# Position Statement

[www.wyre.gov.uk](http://www.wyre.gov.uk)

**wyre**  
council

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# Welcome to **Wyre**

## **We are very pleased to welcome the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) team back to Wyre Council.**

Wyre last had an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in 2017, with a focus on 'Healthier Wyre'.

Not surprisingly, Wyre Council has changed considerably since then and like all organisations, we were proud to play a really important role in responding to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, quickly mobilising community hubs, re-purposing assets and supporting our communities and businesses as much as possible. It was of prime importance to us that we supported the recovery of Wyre's economy and assisted our communities to build back stronger and better, so we set out a clear Covid-19 recovery plan to help Wyre recover as quickly as possible.

A new Leader was appointed in December 2022. Our Chief Executive retired shortly after in March 2023 and we welcomed our new Chief Executive in April that year. The new leadership have agreed a new and ambitious Council Plan with a clear vision:

**'Wyre is a place where everyone can prosper. We want everyone in Wyre to have access to jobs and share the benefits of economic growth; live in thriving, safe, more environmentally-sustainable and welcoming communities; and be healthier and independent for longer.'**



Councillor Michael Vincent, Leader of Wyre Council, and Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive of Wyre Council

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We are delighted to share with you our progress and future plans relating to the five core components of the CPC:

- Local priorities and outcomes
- Organisational and place leadership
- Governance and culture
- Financial planning and management
- Capacity for improvement.

In addition, we have asked you to look at:

- Our economic development work including regeneration, tourism and business support; and
- The Council's emerging plans for transformation and change.

We have co-created this Position Statement in collaboration with teams across the Council and hope it will give you valuable insight into our borough, our challenges, our achievements and our future ambitions. We look forward to a positive dialogue to inform our future direction.



# Overview of Wyre

Wyre is an authority covering 283 square kilometres, with 24 electoral wards. We are a Lancashire coastal district bounded by the sea along parts of our western and northern boundaries. We share a common land boundary with the City of Lancaster to the north, with the boroughs of Ribble Valley, Preston and Fylde to the east and south respectively, and with Blackpool Unitary Authority along the remainder of our south-western boundary.

Wyre lies in the north of what, collectively with Fylde and Blackpool, is known as the Fylde Coast sub-region. Wyre however extends a considerable way inland in the east and includes part of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The northern coastline from Fleetwood to Pilling forms part of Morecambe Bay, which continues along the coastline to Barrow in Cumbria.

Wyre itself is characterised by a distinct geographical polarity, with the main urban areas situated in the west of the borough, and a large expanse of rural area to the east. The urban areas are primarily situated on a peninsula west of the River Wyre, and include the coastal towns of Fleetwood, Thornton and Cleveleys, and to the south, slightly inland, the market town of Poulton-le-Fylde.





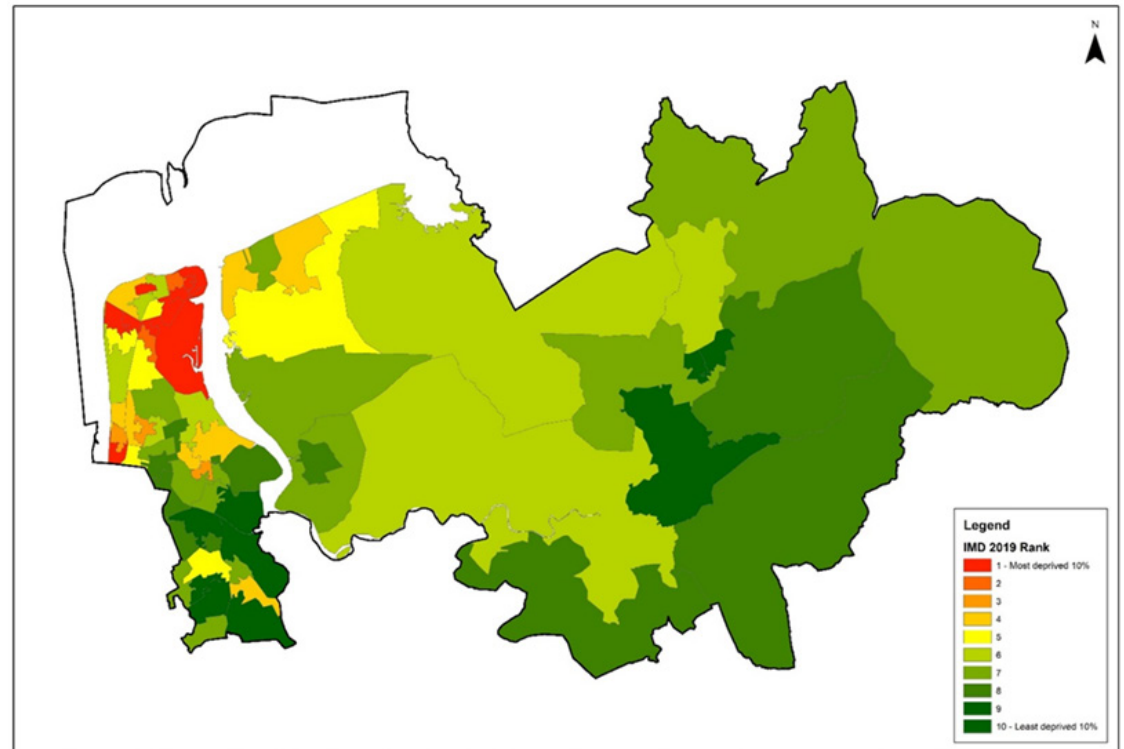


Photo: Michael Coleran

# Overview of Wyre

There is an inequality between urban and rural parts of the borough, with the more deprived neighbourhoods located exclusively in urban areas. Much of Wyre ranks in the least deprived areas of England, with some areas, such as Garstang and parts of Poulton-le-Fylde, Thornton and Cleveleys ranking in the least deprived 10%. Conversely, several areas in Fleetwood are amongst the most deprived 10% in England.

Most of the employment areas are in the west of Wyre in Fleetwood, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. There are however, established industrial and employment areas distributed throughout the borough and rural businesses, including several farming businesses, are important to the sustainability of rural communities and valuable to the local economy.





Hillhouse at Thornton was designated as an Enterprise Zone in 2016. It is now known as Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone, Lancashire and forms part of the Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Energy Cluster. Hillhouse has previously attracted large international companies. The Enterprise Zone designation was expected to further encourage growth and investment in the chemical, advanced manufacturing, and energy sectors. However, recent complexities such as Brexit, Covid-19 and other external variables including the existing infrastructure may have contributed to a slower rate of growth than anticipated.

Fleetwood Port stopped operating in 2010 and the Stena Line ferry also ceased its Fleetwood service. Fleetwood Port remains a designated port, providing opportunities for port-related activities, but it has largely remained vacant. In March 2024, locally based Fox Group announced it had acquired Fleetwood port from Associated British Ports (ABP). This is fantastic news for the town and we hope the investment will help unlock the site for future development. The port is identified in the Fleetwood Regeneration Framework as a potential development opportunity, but constraints and development viability are hindering the development of the site, so the Fox Group investment is key.

The Fleetwood to Knott End independent ferry service remains in situ, providing a vital link for visitors and locals across the estuary.



# Overview of Wyre

Compared to neighbouring authorities, especially Lancaster to the north and Preston to the south, Wyre has relatively poor road access to the national road system; the M6 and West Coast Main Line cut through the eastern end of the borough, but there are no junctions or train stations on either the motorway or railway line.

There is also a tram line, which connects Fleetwood to Blackpool, via Cleveleys. Our sole train station is in Poulton-le-Fylde town centre. This does offer a comprehensive service, including links to London.

The A585 trunk road links Wyre's main urban towns to junction 3 of the M55, but this is in the main a single-carriageway and at peak times is heavily congested in places. The exception is a new £162m bypass around the village of Little Singleton, officially opened in March this year.

In our Council Plan, we articulate our ten-year commitment to 'work with partners to deliver on the return of rail or the delivery of light rail to Thornton and Fleetwood.'

Network Rail submitted a strategic outline Business Case to the Department of Transport in February 2023 which is still pending a ministerial decision. This remains the major practical and financial constraint to us progressing a key infrastructure programme. Such a programme would have the potential to open up the northern part of the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone, as well as bring wider economic benefits to residents and businesses across Wyre.



We use the Local Insight Data Tool to access open-source data to provide up-to-date information about the borough and our communities. The latest report shows key demographic data for Wyre, in comparison to North West and England averages.



# Highlights from the State of Wyre Report

Using data from insight reports from 2021 to 2023.

L-12 refers to the 12 districts in the Lancashire County Council area. Percentages are rounded.



## Population

There are **113,067** people living in Wyre. That's 401 people per km<sup>2</sup>.

Most populated ward is Bourne n=6,981.

56.6% of **18-64 year olds** are of working age population percentage in Lancashire.

28% (31,531) of Wyre's population are aged **over 65**, compared with the North West and England at 18.8% and 18.5%.

The **largest population age groups** are the over 80's (n=8,764) and the 55-59's (n=8,761).

**17,594** people are aged 0-15 years, making up 15.7% of Wyre's population.

**1.7% of the population are black, Asian and minority ethnic** compared to the 14.6% in England. 96% of the population are white British.



## Business and Enterprise

4,135 **VAT/PAYE registered enterprises**, 90% / 3,735 of which are micro enterprises (0-9 employees).

**9% vacant units across town centres in Wyre**, (98 out of 1,101) = below NW and national rates. Fleetwood (14%) is at its lowest rate since 2018. Cleveleys 10%, Poulton 8%, Knott End 6%, Garstang 5% and Thornton 5%.

**Visitor numbers rose from 3.06 million to 4.4 million in 2022**, which shows almost returned to pre-pandemic levels of 4.82 million visitors in 2018. 3.75 million visitors came for a day visit while 0.65 million stayed over as part of a holiday.



## Employment

**53.5% of people aged 16-74 were economically active** in 2021, compared to 57.8% for Lancashire and 60.9% for England. This is a decrease of 4% from 2011, when 57.3% of Wyre's population was economically active.

**28.7% of people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment** compared with 33.1% across Lancashire and 34.4% across England.

The **level of unemployment has decreased**, with 2.6% of the economically active population not in employment compared to 3.2% in 2011. This is better than the Lancashire (2.9%) and England (3.5%) figures.

The median **weekly salary has increased** standing at £479 compared to £463 in 2021. This is lower than the Lancashire average (£487) and England average (£537).

**26% of jobs are not paying the living wage** (UK= 23%).

**16-64's achieving NVQ4 or above (38%)** but still below the 43% national average.

**2nd highest carer claims** in L-12.

8,916 claims of **personal independence payments and disability living allowance** - mostly musculoskeletal disease and mental health or behavioural disorders.



## Community Safety

**93%** of residents considered their local area to be safe.

**Wyre has the 6th lowest overall crime rate in Lancashire** despite an 11% increase in crime, where L-12 saw a decrease of -2.7%.

Sexual offences, domestic abuse and assaults, violence against the person, criminal damage and arson all saw increases in Wyre. Cybercrime and fraud also increased during Covid.

There was a 70% reduction on vehicle crime and a 13% increase in ASB incidents but broadly in line with the Lancashire increases (note: ASB classifications have changed).



## Housing

**50,765 dwellings in Wyre** at the 2021 Census.

In 2023 Wyre recorded **905 vacant dwellings** compared to a total dwelling stock of 54,150, the equivalent of 1.7% and the lowest rate in Lancashire.

Compared with L-12, Wyre has the 3rd highest **dwelling stock**, the highest % of **owner occupiers** (93%) and the 3rd lowest % **social housing stock** (7%).

The **average house price is £170,000**, up by 8%. Gt. Eccleston and Wyresdale command the highest prices at £290,000 and £281,248 respectively. The England average is £280,921.

**New buyers** wanting to enter the housing market will need around **6.04 times their earnings** to buy a house.

**Private renting increased** from 13.5% in 2011 to 18.2% in 2021, whilst the **rate of home ownership decreased** from 77.6% to 73.3%.

In 2020/21 **108 affordable houses were built**, 3,000 dwellings had planning permission and 6,019 dwellings were underway.



## Deprivation

There are 10 small areas (LSOA's) in the top **10% of most deprived areas** and 9 LSOA's in the least 20% of deprived areas. Wyre is relatively more deprived than was the case in the 2015, as is the case with all but 2 districts in Lancashire.

**Number of households in fuel poverty** - 5,996 (12%) are estimated to be fuel poor. This is below the Lancashire (14%) and England (13%) averages. Pharos ward, Fleetwood has the highest percentage (20%).

**Highest number of winter fuel payments** (29,060) and **attendance allowance** (4,206) in Lancashire-12.

# Highlights from the State of Wyre Report

Using data from insight reports from 2021 to 2023.

L-12 refers to the 12 districts in the Lancashire County Council area. Percentages are rounded.



## Health

In 2021, **48.3% of Wyre residents described their health as "very good"** increasing from 46.4% in 2011. This is higher than that for England in 2021 (47.5%).

**Life expectancy in the borough is slightly lower than the national average**, with life expectancy for Wyre being 78.1 for men and 82.4 for women, compared to 79.5 and 83.2 for England, respectively.

There is a **nine year difference in life expectancy for men and women** across all wards in Wyre.

There is an increase in **suicide rates** across Wyre and is now at its highest rate in 20 years with 42 deaths between 2018/20. Wyre has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest rate in NW.

**Hospital admissions for alcohol related harm** in 2021/22 are getting better (561 per 100k population) however are significantly worse than the NW (487) and England (494) rates.

With **an average of 23.8 per 100k population, hospital admissions for violence** (including sexual violence) are lower than the Lancashire (45.8) and England (41.9) average.

Of the estimated residents with diabetes, the **diagnosis rate** (74%) is significantly below the England average (78%) and NW (81%).

Wyre and Fylde has the **second highest estimated rate of diabetes** (27%) in the over 65's compared to all England (18%).

All causes **mortality rate in the under 75's**, and particularly cardiovascular disease and cancer mortality per 10,000 population 2018-2020 shows an increase since the 2011-13 data. Wyre is ranked 51st out of 326 authorities for premature mortality (1st being the worst).

**68.8% of adults in Wyre are classed as being physically active**, compared to 67.9% for Lancashire and 67.3% for England.

**66.7% of adults in Wyre are classed as being overweight or obese**, which is higher than the average for Lancashire (65.7%) and England (63.8%).



## Children's Outcomes

**Nearly 14% (n=2,401) of under 16's are estimated to live in low-income families** (2019/20).

The **number of women smoking at the stage of delivery** (15%) continues to be significantly worse than England (10%). Wyre has the 14th highest rate out of 39 NW authorities.

The proportion of **women breastfeeding from birth** is significantly lower at 68% than the England rate at 75%.

The proportion of **children in Wyre who are classified as obese in Year 6** has increased over recent years from 19.2% in 2018/19 to 23.7% in 2021/22.

**Under 18's pregnancy rates have increased**. Wyre's rates (22.1 per 1,000 females) are lower than the NW rate (23.1), but higher than the England rate (16.7).

Wyre has the **5th highest rate (94%) of 16-17 year olds that are EET** i.e. in employment, education or training in the L-12 n=25,131.

**Cruelty to children/young persons has decreased** by 9% (-3) with 29 offences recorded in 2021 compared to 32 the previous year.



## Environment

**Co2 emissions = 6.1 tonnes per person** (686.5kt) which is above England and UK rates.

The main emission contributors are transport and domestic use.

3rd lowest number of ultra low emission cars in L-12.

**Of 11 Seaside Awards in the North West, Wyre were awarded 4!** Ferry, Marine, Jubilee and Rossall beaches.

No blue flag awards for beaches in the NW in 2023. 1 blue flag was awarded to a NW marina.

**Five Green Flag awards** in 2023, awarded to Vicarage Park in Poulton, Hawthorne Park and Wyre Estuary Country Park in Thornton, and The Mount and Memorial Park in Fleetwood.

Wyre Council collected **45,876.97 tonnes of household waste** from April 2020 to March 2021, a 10% increase since March 2019.

**1023 flytipping reports** in 2022/23, a decrease from the previous year

**352 dog fouling reports** in 2022/23, increased from the previous year.

111th out of 325 LA's in England for **making best use of our heritage potential**.



## Engagement

**3000 residents signed up to online billing** with Wyre Council.

**Increase in followers on all Council comms channels** -

- 12,855 on Twitter
- 14,276 on Facebook
- 2,064 on Instagram
- 3,291 on LinkedIn.

5,587 people are also signed up to receive one or more of the council e-newsletters.

**Average use per mobile data user was up** by 27% to 4.5 GB per month.

6% of households are not online (national rate).

**Top mobile apps ranked by unique visitors:**

- YouTube 41.97 million
- Facebook 41.4 million
- Twitter 27.5 million
- Instagram 23.1 million
- Snapchat 22.7 million.

73% of **UK adult internet users** used online text messages, 54% use online voice calls, 35% use video calls and 55% use emails, at least weekly.

Wyre has **195 council volunteers**.

**237 disabled facilities grants (DFGs) have been delivered** in 2022/23 to a value of £2,182,050.



# Component 1: Local priorities and outcomes

## Assessment of current position

There have been some major changes at Wyre, with a new Council Leader elected in December 2022, a new Chief Executive appointed in April 2023 and 24 new councillors being elected in May 2023.

The previous Council Business Plan covered the period 2019-2023 and was aligned to the election cycle. It had a light touch update in April 2023, with a view to a full review taking place following the local elections. The leadership changes have given us an excellent opportunity to refresh and revitalise the vision and priorities of the Council with our new [Council Plan](#) which was approved by Council in November 2023. This process was informed by our bi-annual [Life in Wyre resident survey](#) and a 'big issues' paper. The latter provided a useful starting point for discussions, giving a snapshot of key national policy development and local policy issues that could impact on Wyre.

In developing the new Council Plan, we held workshops with Cabinet and our Senior Leadership Team, prior to discussion at Overview and Scrutiny Committee before it was finally approved at Full Council.

The new Council Plan sets out our priorities for 2024–2028. Our vision is clear and underpinned by commitments in four priority areas, which will inform our actions and plans. These are:

**People and  
communities**

**Residents live happier,  
healthier and safer lives**

**Growth and  
prosperity**

**A thriving local economy  
and town centres**

**Place and  
climate**

**A cleaner, greener and  
more sustainable place**

**Innovative and  
customer focused**

**A well run, forward-thinking  
council that puts customers first**

## Component 1: **Local priorities and outcomes**

### Assessment of current position

Key projects, which will be reviewed annually, have been identified under each of these priority areas. Each project has a project brief, setting out what the project aims to achieve and including governance arrangements and resource requirements. Progress against the projects is reviewed quarterly and reported to Corporate Management Team and Elected Members. There are also performance indicators, which are reported quarterly to CMT and Elected members. As this is a new process, the first quarterly report has recently been prepared and shows performance from 1 January to 31 March 2024.

[Wyre Voice](#) is our community newsletter, issued with Council Tax bills and published online each year. It is a comprehensive review, showing our progress towards our Council Plan priorities and at the same time promoting local events and involvement opportunities for Wyre residents.

We have recently adopted a new corporate Performance Management Framework that outlines how performance management is aligned to the cyclical strategic and financial planning process. This provided us with the opportunity to review the timing and frequency of key reports, ensuring we have a continuous plan-do-review cycle.

Our Performance Cycle brings together the development and reporting of the strategic and operational performance relating to the Council Plan, service plans, financial plans, risk registers, together with personal performance and development.





# People and Communities

This priority is focused around making sure our residents live happier, healthier and safer lives. A major milestone in delivering this priority is the allocation of more than £400,000 Household Support Funding (HSF - Tranche 5) disseminated to support those who need it, in the first six months of 2024/25. This includes direct financial support to our most vulnerable and financially-disadvantaged residents, as well as support for local foodbanks working across our communities. This latest allocation follows on from four previous HSF rounds, which have enabled us to distribute several million pounds already, including nearly £1m in 2023/24 alone.

We have developed a fantastic holiday activity and food programme, which we use to support families in most need – those whose children qualify for benefits-related free school meals and others classed as vulnerable. Summer 2023 was our most successful holiday provision so far; we delivered 19 holiday camps through 11 providers in 21 venues boroughwide, such as community halls, schools and leisure centres. The programme resulted in 6,082 places for children, including 694 for those of secondary school age.

Supported by UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF), we will be launching a new physical activity and sports initiative in June designed to 'get Wyre moving more'. This is part of our aim to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and create more opportunities for people to lead healthy and active lifestyles. Working with leading local sport providers, we are offering a wide range of opportunities across the borough and working hard to make it easier for people to access these.



We successfully secured £142,000 of revenue funding last November from the Government's Swimming Pool Support Fund for pools at Fleetwood, Poulton and Garstang. The grant was used to help offset increased energy and other costs, such as the chemicals used in operating swimming pools. We have also recently secured £141,000 in capital grant from the same fund to support energy saving improvements at Fleetwood Leisure Centre, which will include photovoltaic panels. This money will help us sustain these much-loved facilities, which play such a vital role in the health and wellbeing of our residents and in teaching people to swim.

## Growth and Prosperity

This priority is focused around developing a robust local economy and thriving town centres. Key progress includes successful completion of 'Neptune' - a multi-million-pound partnership project, which involved purchasing a 40,500ft<sup>2</sup> commercial fish and food processing facility on Fleetwood docks to create new units for 11 food businesses. Neptune will help boost Fleetwood's economy, safeguard its existing fish-processing industry, create up to 100 new jobs and maintain the town's historic links with fishing and the sea.

We secured £3.9m UKSPF monies and £0.4m in Rural England Prosperity Funding. Following this, we worked in partnership with our Town Centre Partnership boards and key stakeholders to develop an outline investment plan to assist strategic business recovery and growth in key economic centres across Wyre.

[UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Wyre Council](#)

As part of this, we have a broad scope of projects currently ongoing. These range from local creative activities, such as events, festivals and arts programmes, through to larger-scale projects to support businesses and improve outcomes for residents. Examples include town centre CCTV upgrades, developing community facilities and improvements to our parks and public realm, as well as a multitude of other exciting projects in between for heritage, climate change, community and voluntary group development and more.



The £4m investment in an improvement and decarbonisation project at Fleetwood Market is nearing completion. Vital enhancements to energy efficiency, the reinstating of some key historic features in the market hall and a brand-new roof, windows and doors are all helping to sustain its future as a key attraction for the borough drawing visitors from across the UK.

We were delighted to be chosen as one of 14 'historic high streets', securing £1.7m from Historic England to deliver the Fleetwood heritage action zone project. In addition to £661,000 funding towards the reinstatement of the patent glazing to the Fleetwood Market roof, this has also enabled key historic buildings to be revived and delivered a cultural programme led by Fleetwood Museum. This built on the already vibrant local arts scene to engage the community through arts.



# Place and Climate

This priority is about creating a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable place. We are committed to our climate change agenda and have made considerable inroads to achieve this. We have provided free support to help local businesses transition to net zero, planted thousands of trees, installed local electric vehicle charging points, worked on improving the energy efficiency of our buildings and most recently converted all the Council's diesel vehicle fleet to Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil (HVO). We're also working on a new Climate Change strategy, developed in consultation with residents, outlining our plan to tackle climate change by reducing our emissions and supporting our communities and businesses to do the same.

We're now into the second phase of our vital £40m coastal defence scheme at Fleetwood, following the success of earlier works in Cleveleys during 2023. This important project will help to significantly reduce the risk of coastal erosion and flooding to more than 11,000 properties and critical infrastructure in Fleetwood and Cleveleys. The first part of the work involved the construction of a works' compound in Cleveleys, rock groynes and concrete ramps between Wyre's boundaries with Blackpool and with Rossall School and creating rock armour toe protection at Rossall Beach. Similar works are now taking place in Fleetwood from Rossall up to the boating lake. The project will continue until summer 2025.



## Innovative and Customer focused

This priority is focused on a well-run, forward-thinking council that puts customers first. Key progress includes a restructure of our Senior Leadership Team to ensure we are in a strong position to deliver the new Council Plan. We have also appointed a new Director of Transformation and Change who joined us in April.

A key part of innovation is naturally Information and Computer Technology (ICT)-related and we have set up a Digital Transformation Board (DTB) to maintain a strategic focus as to how we can utilise advances in technology and automation to deliver more streamlined, improved ways of working.

Some recent examples of DTB projects include the replacement of our former 'Mitel' telephone system with '8x8', which due to its synchronicity with Microsoft Teams offers a much-improved functionality and increased resilience in emergencies. It is much more advanced than anything Wyre Council has used previously and reflects modern demand, offering greater line capacity and a vastly-improved customer experience (e.g. calls were dropped when we exceeded the capacity on the old system which is no longer the case).

A couple of years ago, we invested in a new customer portal, which allows customers to open a MyWyre account and self-serve to a greater degree, online, 24/7. Customers can keep track of their bills and enquiries through this portal, which tailors some information to their requirements. A similar landlord portal also exists, which again has helped to reduce calls to the Contact Centre and streamline the enquiry process.

The Council provided sound leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic and was able to flex resources well to make sure that it had the capacity to respond and change at pace where needed. Colleagues adapted well to changed working practices and culture and consistently delivered services successfully, both virtually and remotely. This strengthened the resilience of some aspects of ICT, particularly our remote-working capability. Work to our ICT infrastructure continued during the pandemic with further improvements planned.

The DTB is also keen to increase our resilience to cyber-attacks. Following several high-profile cases and an increased threat level, owing to the war in Ukraine, our cyber security measures have been overhauled and strengthened to reduce the likelihood of an effective cyber-attack. We have aligned these changes to a new Corporate Cyber Resilience Emergency Response plan and our Business Continuity Plans in ICT. We carry out regular phishing campaigns/testing of users and cyber-security training is undertaken on a regular basis by all staff via our learning portal - Learning Pool. This will be supported by a new training programme which we have recently purchased and will be rolled out to colleagues in bitesize chunks to improve accessibility and increase awareness through a drip-feed approach.

Work is going well on a new asset management strategy to assure us that we are making the best of our land and property assets.



# Life in Wyre

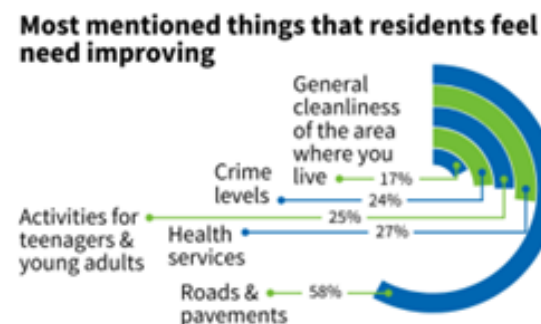
## Resident Satisfaction

The Council commissions a residents' survey every two years to seek local feedback on the services we provide and what is most important to our residents. The last survey took place in 2022. Due to the pandemic the survey prior to this was conducted in 2018.

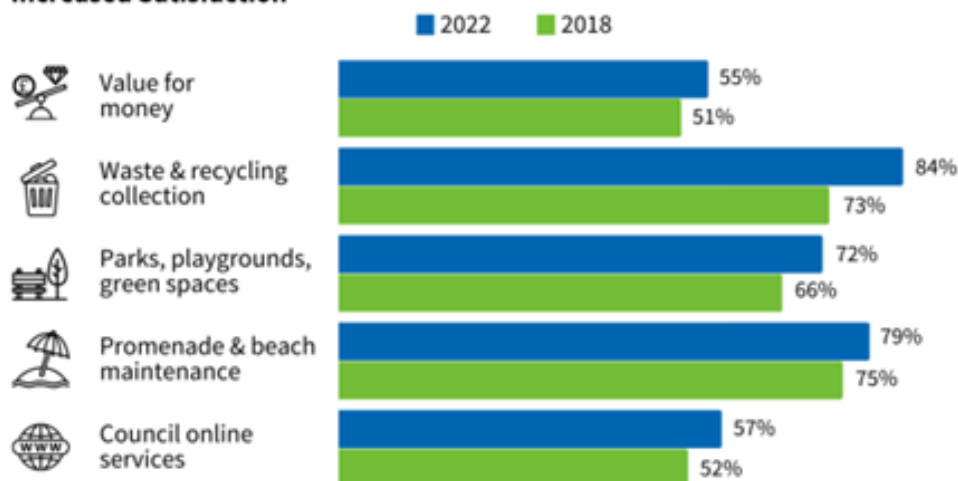
In 2022, 78% of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live which was comparable with the 2018 survey result of 80%.

Satisfaction with Council services was highest for waste and recycling (84%), promenade and beach maintenance (79%) and parks, playgrounds and green spaces (72%).

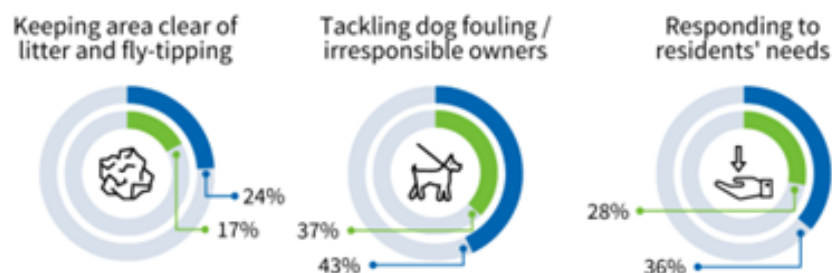
More than half of respondents (58%) think that Wyre keeps residents very or fairly well informed about Council services.



### Increased Satisfaction



### Areas for Improvement: Increased Dissatisfaction



# Our Plans

As mentioned above, we are in the early stages of delivering our new Council Plan which we are keen to ensure is clearly embedded throughout our organisation. We are in the process of developing enhanced service plans to ensure our priorities are integrated into service areas and equally that all our staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

In autumn, we intend to carry out a refresh of our new Council Plan. Over the past 18-months, we have been holding colleague listening day sessions as part of our internal communications' work and will use these to raise awareness and encourage engagement. The refresh will look at adding in any new priority areas of work, as required, to make sure we remain focused on our strategic vision and commitments.

We have set up a core team of project managers responsible for the delivery of Council Plan projects and will use this group to develop a Project Management 'community of practice' to share learning and support each other.

## Examples of good practice that the LGA can share with the sector

[Holiday, Activity and Food programme in action across Wyre](#)



## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Assessment of current position

Our strategic vision for both Wyre and our organisation is set out in our Council Plan.

Wyre is a place where everyone can prosper. We want everyone in Wyre to have access to jobs and share the benefits of economic growth; live in thriving, safe, more environmentally sustainable and welcoming communities; and be healthier and independent for longer.

We are proud of the collaborative approach we have developed with our key partners to drive improvements in our local area and look forward to sharing some of the impact of this rich network with the Peer team during the on-site visit. For a relatively small District Council with just over 300 full time equivalent staff, we are able to deliver exciting and impactful projects. This is mainly due to our symbiotic relationships within a much broader talent pool of external partner agencies, volunteers and community groups.



## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership



### Our town centres

Wyre has four main towns; each one is unique with different opportunities and challenges. The one common factor is proud and resilient communities. We work closely with local Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCFS) sector organisations to tailor our approach to each distinct area in order to best deliver our priorities, such as developing Wyre's town centres to be 'thriving and welcoming places to live work and visit'. As such, we have supported each area to develop a detailed town centre framework plan and establish partnership boards to drive the development of a regeneration and investment framework for each town and its surrounding area.

[Town centre partnership boards](#)

### Our place in Lancashire

We work closely across Lancashire with the 11 other District Councils, 2 Unitary Councils and Lancashire County Council across a range of strategic and regional programmes.

One recent example has been the [Lancashire 2050 plan](#) which sets out a shared vision, ambition, goals and priorities to help shape the county and its people. The strategy has eight priority areas:

- Economic prosperity
- Transport and infrastructure
- Environment and climate
- Housing
- Early years and education
- Employment and skills
- Health and wellbeing
- Communities and place



## Lancashire County Combined Authority (LCCA)

In November 2023, the Government announced it would be willing to enter into a devolution deal with Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council. This devolution deal will see the transfer of money and powers from central government, better enabling Lancashire to tackle significant local priorities such as affordable housing and public transport, as well as helping to boost economic prosperity and improve employment and skills.

An eight-week public consultation was launched in December to gather feedback on the devolution proposal. The results of the consultation have seen the majority of respondents welcome the proposal. Where concerns have been raised, they have been reviewed and used to update the proposal document.

During March, each of the upper tier authorities discussed the findings of the consultation at meetings of their Full Council and approved recommendations to proceed with Lancashire's plans for devolution and to jointly submit a devolution proposal to Government. Each council supported the view that a Combined County Authority (CCA) should be set up to allow powers and budgets to be devolved from centre government to Lancashire.

The Secretary of State is now expected to lay an order in Parliament to establish the new combined authority before the summer recess, with the new Lancashire CCA being established by the Autumn.

The proposed CCA would have up to eight Members in total, comprising:

- Four constituent members (with Lancashire County Council appointing two members and Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Councils appointing one each);
- Two non-constituent members nominated by the District Councils within the area;
- Up to two further non-constituent or associate members, to be appointed by the CCA.

The four constituent members would have full voting rights. The CCA would have the power to grant voting rights to the non-constituent members.

District Councils will collectively be asked to nominate additional individuals as substitutes and representatives on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Audit and Committee and several other committees. It's thought that, overall, there will be 12 seats for District Council representatives and Wyre's Leader has been working with the other Council Leaders to discuss proposals for the nomination process.

It is important that Wyre's and the Fylde Coast's voice is heard, and that the borough can maximise the opportunities which devolution will bring to Lancashire. To strengthen our position, we are actively looking at opportunities to collaborate on shared projects across the Fylde Coast.



## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Impact of Covid-19

During the pandemic, we quickly mobilised community hubs to support our most vulnerable residents and a number of our assets were successfully re-purposed. This included one of our theatres - Marine Hall - which became a food hub for food parcel preparation/distribution and was also used as a food bank, Poulton Leisure Centre which became a Testing Centre and Thornton Little Theatre and the Civic Centre here in Poulton, both of which became vaccination centres. Wyre was featured more than once on BBC News owing to our vaccination statistics being consistently in the top three in the country and we credit this to the success of working in partnership with the NHS and other organisations.

In addition to improvements made in relation to hybrid working, technology and virtual meetings referred to earlier, other positive lessons learned were adopted as 'business as usual' to make best use of the experience gained. For instance, we coped well with elections being run under Covid-19/social distancing measures and some of the changes made to protect colleagues and others have now become 'the norm' during the election period. For example, the use of Perspex screens at the verification and count stage and an improved queuing system for the receiving of the ballot boxes on election night. This has sped up the election process by around an hour and removed the need for two collection stations.

Much was achieved by working together during a time of heightened uncertainty. Below are some key statistics to give a flavour of our work:

- Worked with our partners at the community food hubs to help deliver more than 53,000 food parcels;
- Contacted over 13,000 vulnerable people in Wyre to offer advice and support;
- Dealt with 1,538 requests for help with prescriptions and 2,532 requests for help with shopping;
- Paid over £52 million in grants to over 3,000 businesses;
- Processed over 700 applications for Self Isolation Grants;
- Supported a highly successful vaccine programme by using our buildings and by carrying out a proactive communications campaign to promote the vaccine programme;
- Established a Test and Trace team which made thousands of calls to people with Coronavirus and their close contacts;
- Carried out 14,000 visits to businesses to offer reopening advice and guidance on being Covid-19 secure;
- Delivered 900 business reopening packs to premises across Fleetwood, Thornton, Cleveleys, Poulton, Garstang, Great Eccleston and Knott End.

## Partnering for health and wellbeing

In Wyre, we have well-established health partnerships which have and continue to make a real difference to people's lives in the borough. '[Healthier Fleetwood](#)' is a prime example of this and was a key case study at the time of the last Peer Review.

This Healthier Fleetwood partnership still exists today and goes from strength to strength. It remains a key point of contact for the community, supporting residents to improve their physical and mental health. In 2022, Healthier Fleetwood was honoured to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, recognising the crucial role it plays in supporting the community. The team has recently opened an information centre, which hosts drop-in events with community partners, including the Fleetwood social prescribers.

We also feed into the work of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Partnership through new place-based partnerships. These partnerships are a collaboration of planners and providers across health, local authority and wider community organisations who all take a collective responsibility for improving the health and wellbeing of residents within 'a place'.



The partnerships work together to make sure services are joined up to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the population, prevent people from being unwell and reduce health inequalities across neighbourhoods.

To assist in this work, Lancashire has been split into three 'localities'; Central and West Lancashire, East Lancashire and North Lancashire. Wyre forms part of the North Lancashire locality together with Fylde and Lancaster. The Council chairs and supports the Fylde and Wyre Health and Wellbeing Partnership and over the last six months the partnership has identified three priority areas of work for collaborative action: children and young people's mental health; supporting older people to stay well and lifestyle support and prevention activity. The partnership is now identifying collaborative projects to support and address these challenges/priorities.

## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Our Community Safety Partners

Our Council Plan sets out a commitment to raise feelings of safety and security amongst our communities and to work with partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

Thankfully, in general, Wyre has low levels of crime, which at 62 crimes per 1,000 population in 2022 are significantly lower than the average for Lancashire of 87. However, this picture does mask significant issues of violent crime and domestic abuse in some of the borough's most deprived wards. There are also some serious Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) operating in these areas which are drug-related. Fleetwood, especially, has been identified as a hot spot area for anti-social behaviour in Lancashire, which is of particular concern given that anti-social behaviour is often viewed as a pathway towards criminality and Organised Crime Group activity.

To tackle these challenges head on, we work closely with our Community Safety Partnership members. The Partnership is an excellent example of an effective and mature multi-agency approach, which has a vision for people to be able to live without fear for their own safety, or the safety of others and to secure sustainable reductions in crime and disorder and the fear of crime.

The main outcomes for Wyre are:

- creating safer environments by tackling crime;
- improving lives by reducing the harm caused by substance misuse;
- supporting victims and reducing the risk of victimisation;
- reducing offending and managing offending behaviour;
- improving community confidence and public satisfaction.

We are currently working with the Police on the delivery of the 'Clear, Hold, Build initiative'. Clear, Hold, Build aims to:

- tackle Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) acting in the neighbourhood;
- build community resilience;
- improve confidence and trust in the Police;
- make the area a safer place to live;

This is achieved through three flexibly deployed phases of activity, hence the name of 'Clear, Hold and Build (CHB)'.

#### **Clear**

The clear phase involves initial targeted enforcement activity (arrests and relentless disruption) that target OCG members, their networks, business interests, criminality, and spheres of influence.

#### **Hold**

The hold phase involves consolidating and stabilising the initial clear phase to stop remaining or other OCG members capitalising on the vacuum created.

#### **Build**

The build phase involves a whole-system approach to delivering community-empowered interventions that tackle drivers of crime, exploitation of vulnerabilities and hotspots of harm.



## Economic partnerships

We work with many partner organisations to develop our local economy and to support new and existing businesses in Wyre. Some of the key partnerships are:

### **BOOST**

Following Brexit and the discontinuation of funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the BOOST service was awarded UKSPF money from Wyre Council. In terms of business support to businesses operating in Wyre, BOOST, who operate as a part of Lancashire County Council, remains our main delivery partner.

[Boost Business Lancashire](#)

### **Chamber Low Carbon**

A second partnership, again made possible through UKSPF funding is the “Chamber Low Carbon” programme. The East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in partnership with North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, BOOST and local authority partners are supporting Lancashire businesses to save money, reduce their carbon footprint, stimulate low carbon innovation, and achieve their Net Zero Carbon ambitions. This aligns to our commitment to tackling climate change.



### **Wyred Up Network**

We have set up a business support network to:

- grow, year-on-year, the Wyred Up network of businesses and interested parties;
- host an annual Business Awards event to celebrate and champion businesses in the borough;
- provide relevant, targeted business support in a timely manner to Wyre businesses, with a specific focus on supporting small independent businesses in the borough;
- engage meaningfully with Wyre businesses through face-to-face/virtual meetings, print and email bulletins, social media, networking events and face-to-face clinics;
- act as the first contact for Wyre businesses requiring business support;
- proactively signpost additional services to Wyre businesses.

[Wyred Up Network promotional video](#)

## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Economic partnerships

#### Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board

This brings together councillors and officers from local authority partners in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre to shape and drive economic development across the Fylde Coast. The administration of the Board changes every three years and we have just begun our facilitation role for 2024/25. The responsibilities of the Board are to:

- act as the key strategic forum for economic development issues on the Fylde coast and to make recommendations on economic development investments and other priorities;
- co-ordinate and monitor investment plans of the constituent authorities pertaining to economic growth at the discretion of the individual authorities;
- act as the Programme Board for Hillhouse Technology and Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zones (EZs)
- seek to ensure that adequate resources are made available to enable the delivery of Hillhouse Technology and Blackpool Airport EZs and other key Fylde coast economic development priorities and projects;
- actively engage with a range of businesses on the Fylde coast in relation to economic development decision-making and engage with other stakeholders where appropriate;
- consider and advise on the appropriateness and viability of alternative, successor economic governance arrangements, and;
- co-ordinate and agree wider place-making policy within the Fylde coast economic footprint, wherever possible.

The remit of the Board has previously been aligned with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, until it ceased to exist at the end of March 2024. It is now expected that, once established, the new Lancashire Combined Authority will integrate the functions previously held by the LEP.

## Climate and Environment

### Our Future Coast

Our Future Coast (OFC) is a scheme to develop environmental community-owned coastal buffer strips along the North West Coast. It is funded through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Innovative Resilience Fund.

An OFC board has been created to oversee the project and consists of nine members from the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Morecambe Bay partnership, Natural England, The Environment Agency, Coastal Habitat Creation Specialist ABP Mer, Chair of North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), Marine Management Organisation, The National Trust, Lancaster University and Wyre Council's Assistant Director of Engineering.

The OFC Board acts as a steering group for the project, but ultimate responsibility for delivery of the scheme and adherence to procurement rules remains with Wyre Council. Wyre have appointed a Project Manager for the OFC scheme who will manage the overall project including the 14 demonstration sites, which will be delivered by a variety of external partners across the region.

The following grant partner agreements are in place for the delivery and management of OFC demonstration sites: Wyre Rivers Trust, Lancaster City Council, Fylde Council, Sefton Council, Westmorland & Furness Council, Morecambe Bay Partnership and Lancashire Wildlife Trust.





## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Climate and Environment

#### Delivery of capital sea defences

Following on from our award-winning schemes at Cleveleys and Rossall Beach, we are in the process of delivering the 'Wyre Beach Management Scheme' - a major £40m coastal defence project. Wyre Council secured funding from the Environment Agency to better protect 11,000 properties and infrastructure against flooding and erosion. The work to construct rock armour toe protection and new rock groynes is being carried out by Balfour Beatty and managed by a Partnership Board consisting of the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety, Wyre Council officers, Balfour Beatty and The Environment Agency.

The Council is developing a [Climate Change Strategy](#), which outlines how we plan to reduce levels of emissions locally, as well as preparing local people and businesses to adapt to the impacts of the changing climate. It highlights the main risks we face locally from climate change and its impact on our residents, our local wildlife and Council services. It also outlines the positive opportunities that an action plan generates, such as new job creation, new opportunities for new types of businesses and product development, improving health and wellbeing, and contributing to our sustainable development goals. A series of action plans are included at the end of the document, which are based on eight objectives: buildings, transport, Net Zero Council, planning, biodiversity, engagement, waste, and adaptation. These update our existing action plans and cover our direct operations, as well as corresponding work where we can support others by using our influence in showcasing, engaging and creating policies to enable emissions reduction right across the borough.

## Town and Parish Councils

There are 21 parish and town Councils within Wyre. The majority of the borough is parished like this, except for the urban areas of Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde. Wyre's Electoral Services are the first point of contact for Parish and Town Councils. Our team deal with questions, offer signposting to other services and help with facilitating any by-elections. Our Monitoring Officer will also advise on compliance to their own Standing Orders and Code of Conduct issues. We have recently invited all towns and parishes to attend a full in-house Code of Conduct training event. We have a dedicated section on our website which has links to each individual Town or Parish Council to help local residents.

## Volunteers

The Council gets amazing support from volunteers. We currently have 202 volunteers, and last year (2023/24) the number of volunteer hours worked equated to 30,512 in total.

The current volunteering opportunities are varied and include:

- Coast and Countryside Service;
- Parks and Open Spaces;
- Theatres;
- CCTV;
- Community Litter Picking;
- Bike Repair/Maintenance;
- Wyre Wheels;
- Social Cycling;
- Arts and Health.

We work alongside the NHS and their social prescribing teams to help improve our residents' health and wellbeing, by promoting volunteering and physical activity. We also support those who are unemployed by encouraging them to volunteer. This naturally helps them gain new skills and enhance their CV. To do this, we work alongside the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Fleetwood Town's employability programme.



## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Organisational Leadership

Our Corporate Management Team (CMT) is made up of the Chief Executive, Directors and the Council's Monitoring Officer. CMT meet weekly and play a central and visible role in the running of the organisation.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) includes all CMT Members and all Assistant Directors. This sub-group meets monthly, and the role of SLT members is not just to deliver on our priorities and ensure high-quality services, but to also embed good governance and strong leadership. We would hope they 'lead from the top' and create a positive culture, with engaged and happy teams.

We have made minor changes to how each of these groups operate in line with the new senior leadership changes, following our restructure.

Weekly informal meetings are also held between CMT and the Leader and Deputy Leader, along with fortnightly larger Management Boards, which are private meetings between Cabinet and CMT. Proposals for how to strengthen these meetings further without them becoming an industry in themselves are in discussion. What we are aiming to achieve is to:

- ensure valuable time spent in these meetings is focused on priority areas;
- plan further in advance, so the Leader and Cabinet Members can provide strategic direction earlier;
- ensure that the Leader and Cabinet are better informed in order to make decisions and provide direction;
- support better decision-making and provide a clear audit trail; and
- create greater opportunities for the wider Senior Leadership Team, Leader and Cabinet to work more closely together, building better relationships, trust and a cohesive approach.



Following approval of our Council Plan, we undertook a review of the Senior Leadership Team's (SLT) capacity to deliver the Council's vision, priorities and commitments.

The objectives of this review were to:

- ensure the right SLT structure, capacity and skills are in place to deliver the Council's priorities over the next four years;
- strengthen the roles, responsibilities and expectations of SLT members as leaders within the organisation, affecting both their corporate responsibilities and their service delivery responsibilities;
- strengthen the position and responsibility of the Monitoring Officer, bringing this important statutory role into the SLT and Corporate Management Team (CMT);
- create capacity to lead and drive organisational transformation and deliver against the Council's new priority to be innovative and customer-focused; and
- review and address pay levels, based on benchmarking across Lancashire to ensure our salary scales are more in line with other authorities across Lancashire. This will drive recruitment and retention and help to mitigate the risk that we are unable to implement the Council Plan.

These proposals were approved by Full Council in January 2024 and have now been fully implemented.



## Component 2: Organisational and place leadership

### Political Leadership

The Leader and Cabinet responsibilities are set out below:

#### Cllr Michael Vincent

**Role:** Leader

**Areas of responsibility:** Strategic leadership, external partnerships, and public relations.

#### Cllr Roger Berry

**Role:** Deputy Leader and Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder

**Areas of responsibility:** Flood and coastal defences, private sector housing, homelessness, community safety, car parking.

#### Cllr Lesley McKay

**Role:** Resources Portfolio Holder

**Areas of responsibility:** Finance, human resources, emergency planning, asset management, procurement, council tax and value for money.

#### Cllr Lynne Bowen

**Role:** Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder

**Areas of responsibility:** Sport, leisure and cultural facilities and development, theatres & community halls, tourism, countryside management, conservation protection, public health, food safety, environmental health and community engagement.

#### Cllr Simon Bridge

**Role:** Street scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder

**Areas of responsibility:** Refuse collection, recycling, street cleaning, public conveniences, dog control, parks and open spaces and playing fields.

#### Cllr Peter Le Marinel

**Role:** Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

**Areas of responsibility:** Economic development, regeneration, development control, transport infrastructure, housing, building control, planning, conservation, environmental improvement and councillor development.

Cllr Rob Fail is the Leader of the Labour Group.

Cllr Colette Rushforth is the Leader of the Wyre Independent Group.

[Decision-making democratic structure chart](#)

# Our Plans

We are currently developing a new Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategy. We will engage with partners and key stakeholders in the priority setting and development of the Strategy that will:

- set a new deliverable vision;
- support the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in the borough, and in doing this, drive improvement in the quality of life of our residents and productivity of businesses, now and into the future;
- build on the detailed work already undertaken to help support the strategic business recovery in our four key economic centres;
- set out an evidence base that will help to set future priorities within the Council Plan and support external funding bids when they arise;
- provide a strategic approach reflecting local needs and opportunities;
- offer strategic intervention to economic growth - supports Levelling Up;
- generate an increase in satisfaction with the business and tourism environment and ensure enhanced pride of place;
- enhance the reputation not just of Wyre Council but of the borough as a whole to attract visitors and inward investment;
- put Wyre firmly on the map and raise awareness of Wyre with residents, businesses, visitors, policymakers, funders, the local government sector and funding bodies enabling it to have a stronger voice in any decisions affecting the north-west region.





## Examples of good practice that the LGA can share with the sector

In early 2024, the Council approved the use of Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to replace diesel as the primary fuel source for our vehicle fleet. HVO is a more sustainable fuel than diesel, as it is produced from fats and vegetable oils transformed into biofuel by hydrogenation. Not only is this palm oil free, but no costly vehicle upgrades are necessary for the replacement, which allows for significant emissions savings from larger vehicles such as our bin wagons, where current Electric Vehicle (EV) technology, grid connections and high costs limit the potential to go fully electric. It is estimated that this change will result in a 30% reduction in the Council's annual carbon footprint, making a significant impact on our net zero ambitions.





# Component 3:

## Governance and culture

### Assessment of current position

Good governance at Wyre Council is ensuring we do the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. To assist us in achieving this, we have robust systems and processes, a positive culture and values – all of which we strive to consistently embed across the organisation and in everything we do, enabling us to deliver our Council Plan effectively.

The preparation and publishing of the [Council's Annual Governance Statement \(AGS\)](#) allows us to demonstrate how we measure ourselves against a suggested framework published by CIPFA / SOLACE, which sets out seven core principles of good governance and what expected outcomes an organisation should be able to demonstrate if their governance framework is operating effectively and as intended. An AGS is formulated, following a yearly workshop attended by both statutory and key officers. Alongside the regular monitoring of any improvement plans at CMT and our Council Audit and Standards Committee we can show that we are committed to improving our corporate governance framework.



## Component 3: Governance and culture

### Constitution / Decision Making

The Council's Constitution is our primary document for legislating how we conduct our business and make decisions. Regular refresher training is delivered to decision-makers and key spending officers to ensure application of the Constitution is lawful, ethical and consistent.

In the same way that new employees are inducted on the staff Code of Conduct, newly Elected Members also receive training on their Code of Conduct. This was last delivered in May 2023 when several new Councillors joined the Council, and a further training session is organised for later this year.

Wyre Council is represented by 50 Elected Members across 24 wards. It is currently made up of 30 Conservative Members, 17 Labour Members, 2 Wyre Independent Group Members and 1 Independent Member. Wyre operates the 'executive model' of decision-making. The Executive consists of a Leader and five Cabinet Members who, as a group, or as individual Portfolio Holders, take many of the Councillor-level decisions. These decisions are documented in advance of the decisions being taken on a forward plan (Schedule of Executive Decisions). The plan includes a brief description of each decision to be made and who will make it, the date by which the decision is expected to be taken, details of any planned consultation (e.g. with local people and other stakeholders) and who to contact for further information.

Whilst Full Council approves our overall budget and policy framework, it does delegate to certain committees the authority to take decisions on its behalf. For example, the Audit and Standards Committee approve the Financial Regulations and Procedure Rules. In addition, various decisions are also delegated by both the Cabinet and the Full Council to officers. These are documented in the Scheme of Delegation within the Constitution.





## Overview and Scrutiny

The primary role of the Council's main Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee is to support, scrutinise and hold the work of the Cabinet and Full Council to account. To help it in this task, an annual work programme is formulated following a workshop in February each year with the Corporate Management Team and Members of the O&S Committee. In addition to the main O&S Committee, a Climate Change Scrutiny sub-committee was established in June 2023 to report specifically on the interests of climate change matters affecting Wyre.

As is standard practice, we also have a 'call in' procedure in place which monitors the decisions of the Cabinet. This allows the O&S Committee to consider if the decision is in accordance with the Constitution or if it needs to be reconsidered. There are no Cabinet Members on the O&S Committee and to uphold openness and transparency, every meeting is held in public.

## Member development

We recognise the importance of ensuring our Elected Members have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities and have a comprehensive learning and development framework in place. Following 'all out' Borough Elections in May 2023, with the largest turnover in newly Elected Members seen for many decades, we took the opportunity to roll out an extensive induction programme.

In addition to the newly developed Councillor portal, giving Councillors a 'one-stop information dashboard', Members were also asked to complete a 'strengths and development questionnaire' (SDQ) which helped them define what they would like to achieve over their time in term and if they required additional skills and training to support them to undertake their roles. The SDQ also allowed strengths and weaknesses to be highlighted, allowing the Democratic Services Team to invest in the most appropriate additional training requirements over the coming months and years.

Whilst specific committees eg. Planning and Licensing Committee train and develop their members individually on the respective committee's Terms of Reference, the Council's Democratic Services team provides numerous opportunities throughout the year for all Councillors to develop their knowledge and skills as required. This year has revealed a much greater training need, which has led to a successful 'growth bid' in the Member Training budget. Since last May, the team has organised 52 training courses in total, which were attended by 491 Elected Members.

## Component 3: Governance and culture

### Internal Control and Risk Management

An important stream to our governance framework is the effectiveness of the internal control environment and its assessment and management of both strategic and operational risks. The Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Opinion successfully sets out how these areas are being managed and what level of assurance can be placed on these areas across the organisation. The Opinion also allows for any areas of concerns to be identified or if there are any issues that should be reflected in the AGS.

Whilst small, the team have a wealth of qualifications and experience and are highly regarded across the organisation. Self-assessment and benchmarking exercises are continual, with the team using both 'internal' and 'external' mechanisms to ensure they continue to deliver effective and valued services. In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), a recent external peer review reported that the team demonstrated 'full compliance' to the standards, with only minor issues being identified that required consideration.

We have a robust risk management framework in place which has been successfully embedded across Wyre Council. A recent external peer review reported 'substantial assurance' can be placed on our overall risk management processes and it identified a number of areas of good practice. For example, a risk management strategy has been adopted and approved by Committee, risk management procedures were in place to record and monitor strategic, operational and ICT risks and key project and partnerships risks are also identified and monitored through the Audit team sitting on and providing assurance to working groups e.g. the Beach Management Scheme.

Business Continuity and Insurance also sits with the Internal Audit Team, given their intrinsic links to risk and internal control. Whilst Business Continuity plans are already in place, we are in the process of refreshing these templates, refining them to be more streamlined, more reflective of hybrid-working advances and most importantly, more user friendly.

## Audit and Standards Committee

The Audit and Standards Committee is a key component of our corporate governance framework with its main purpose being to give independent assurance to Full Council, on the adequacy of our internal control, risk management and governance arrangements. Supported by the Monitoring Officer, it is also responsible for upholding and encouraging the highest standards of Conduct from all Elected Members, in line with a Local Code of Conduct.

The Committee, which currently includes one external Independent Member (we are endeavouring to recruit a second), meets at least four times a year. Regular attendance from the Council's Section 151 Officer, Chief Internal Auditor, External Auditor and the Assistant Director of Governance and Legal, who is also the Council's Monitoring Officer and current Data Protection Officer, means that the Committee can obtain the information they need to fulfil their discharged responsibilities from Full Council.

Like Internal Audit, the Committee also assess their effectiveness annually, which provides another chance to identify any training and development requirements. A comprehensive work programme, developed by officers in conjunction with the Committee Chair, ensures they fulfil their Terms of Reference with a periodic report being submitted to Full Council to set out the work of the committee and demonstrate where assurance has been provided.





## Component 3: Governance and culture

### Information Governance

To assist with the management of our information governance framework, there is a large suite of guidance, policies and procedures located on the Wyre Hub (our in-house SharePoint intranet). These approved documents assist the organisation in setting and defining acceptable behaviours in the collection, use, sharing and retention of information (data).

In addition to six-monthly updates submitted to Audit and Standards Committee, who also have delegated authority for data protection and Cyber, we have set up an Information Governance Group, which meets at least quarterly to discuss key information governance risks. Set agenda items include: information governance performance measures and statistics, data protection and ICT incidents / breaches plus any other key risks that have been identified through risk workshops or the Digital Transformation Board. Quarterly reports are subsequently submitted to CMT for consideration.

Data, as for all councils, is our largest asset, therefore protection of our data is paramount. Regular compliance checks to the necessary regulations and guidance ensures that we continue to improve our control environment. We recently carried out an internal audit review and are now working through the subsequent actions for improvement suggested.



## Governance of our key partnerships and receipt of external funding

Our Financial Procedure Rules clearly set out the expected controls and responsibilities in respect of the governance arrangements for working in partnership and in cases when we are in receipt of external funding.

In addition to having a Partnering Charter template and a 'Framework for Partnership Working', there is also a clear set of guidelines which assist officers to ensure value for money is obtained during any procurement process. It sets out step by step guidance on the partnering process and suggests ways to assess the effectiveness of any partnership arrangements.

As most councils, Wyre has a diverse portfolio of partnering arrangements in place. The AGS workshop is an opportunity to discuss these partnerships and comment on their effectiveness and overall governance frameworks. For example, the YMCA, Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Veolia Service Development Board, Community Safety Partnership and 'Wyred Up' are all instances of collaborative/partnership working, even if they may be often carried out under a contract arrangement.

In addition to regular in-house monitoring, numerous Boards and groups also regularly monitor performance. Furthermore, our Internal Audit team also include reviews of existing partnership arrangements in their audit planning. Some of the larger partnering arrangements / contracts may have their own process of identifying key risks and control weaknesses. An example of this might be our Beach Management Scheme, whereas other partnerships' risks may sit in individual operational risk registers, such as the YMCA and the forthcoming contract renewal.

We comply with any external reporting requirements for the receipt and spend of any external funding e.g. the UKSPF monies or Disabled Facilities Grants funding. In conjunction, we also ensure internal mechanisms are in place to assist in ensuring the successful delivery of any arrangements. This could include Internal Audit assurance or regular updates to our Corporate Management Team and Management Board.



## Component 3: Governance and culture

### Equality and Diversity

We have engaged the services of the Head of Equality and Diversity at Blackpool Council to carry out an assessment of our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Pleasingly, their report has identified that there are some good – and outstanding – examples of current practice in the Council stating:

- the Council has a sound strategic understanding, agenda and vision of its wider role set out in the Wyre Council Plan which has a strong emphasis on issues related to equality and diversity, such as community engagement and cohesion;
- the Council has a 0% gender equality gap – which is outstanding performance;
- the Council has a good robust and up to date set of workforce equality policies and procedures;
- the Council has an overall corporate performance orientated ethos, which will help to provide a good platform and the capacity to take forward the recommendations to improve;
- there is clear evidence of improved compliance with the general equality duty, related to decision making – since training was introduced 18 months ago.





# Our Plans

Looking forward and continuing in our endeavours to strive towards an organisation that residents, officers, Elected Members and other stakeholders trust and respect, we will continue to focus on the improvement of openness, accountability and transparency. As we embark on our journey of transformation and develop new strategies, relationships and working practices, it is vital that strong governance arrangements are in place from the outset. Strong risk management, horizon scanning and internal audit planning will become essential in ensuring success and continual improvement.

Whilst the annual governance action plan for 2023/24 will drive the majority of the improvements needed around our governance framework, our recruitment and selection process, alongside the performance management appraisal process will still be relied upon to ensure our officers are instilled with the expected values and behaviours from the outset.

Ethical Governance Surveys will be repeated in the summer with both colleagues and Elected Members expecting to participate in demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the key policies and procedures that overarch our governance framework.

Improving the transparency of decision-making is a key priority going forward, with this in mind we are looking to update the sound equipment in the Council Chamber ensuring that meetings can be 'live streamed' in addition to publishing the audio recording, as we presently do, following the meeting.

We will continue to use the management information received in respect of complaints, feedback and compliments that come through and will ensure lessons are learnt and services are improved following critical feedback. We will also continue to receive and take advice from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and the Information Commissioner Officer (ICO) in relation to improvements and sanctions. [Annual reports](#) from the LGO are reported to Full Council and published for transparency.

We have developed an action plan following our Equality and Diversity assessment. This will involve publishing one or more SMART Equality objective/s, introducing mandatory Equality and Diversity training for all managers and Elected Members, consistently applying a standardised template for the Equality Analysis of key decisions, and introducing Equality monitoring systems which include the full range of equality characteristics.

# Component 4:

## Financial planning and management

### Assessment of current position

At Wyre we are proud of our strong financial position. We are a debt-free authority and have a healthy level of general balances and reserves (£32.474m forecast as at 1 April 2024).

However, like all councils, we are facing the ongoing challenges of increasing costs and demands outweighing income and as a result, we need to find ways to manage this gap to achieve a balanced budget. When we last reported the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position to Budget Council in March, we were estimating a budget gap of £3.968m by 2028/29.

Wyre received a good opinion from the last Peer Review in 2017 and we have endeavoured to build on this and maintain high standards across the finance function. We have a strong track record of endorsement in the Value For Money commentaries from external audit (with positive verbal assurances provided to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee by Deloitte on the outstanding years pending their formal report later in the year), CIPFA's Financial Resilience Index and Oflog performance measures are similarly reassuring.









## Component 4: Financial planning and management

### Medium Term Financial Planning

We publish a [Medium-Term Financial Plan \(MTFP\)](#) update twice a year. The main updated forecast, reflecting the December Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS), forms a key part of the budget report in February each year, which goes to Cabinet. This then goes to Full Council in March, accompanying the annual Council Tax report and Treasury Management Policies and Practices etc.

Included in the Cabinet report are the latest capital programme, the annual efficiency statement, the results of the budget consultation and information on reserves, amongst other items. The MTFP looks ahead to cover a five-year period, reflecting the latest forecasts based on a number of sources including regular meetings with spending officers, reports approved during the year containing financial implications, Officer Delegated Reports on staffing, as well as information provided by central government such as technical consultations and the LGFS. In January 2024, we reported a £54.610m Capital

Programme up to the end of 2028/29, the majority of which is funded by external grants and contributions. The programme is made up of a small number of large programmes of work, of which the most significant is the Wyre Beach Management coastal defence scheme. Capital updates are scheduled to go to Cabinet in July, October, January and with the budget report. We also report on our Treasury Management activity in a backward-looking annual report in July and half-way through the current year in November. A consolidated Fees and Charges report is scheduled for approval in Quarter 3 (Q3) each year, to coincide with the Revised Estimate/budget setting process. Ad hoc fees and charges' reports can be approved outside of this cycle as well.

Budget-related briefings are held for Members and senior officers at regular intervals with recordings provided to try and reach as many of these stakeholders as possible. The annual efficiency statement is a snapshot at a point in time with the most recent capturing evidence of nearly £7.3m in revenue savings since 2010/11, including a forecast £143,300

saving in 2024/25. Our forecast budget gap at the end of the current MTFP period (2028/29) is £3.968m and we currently have plans in place for bridging the gap over that same period. This includes using reserves and balances, in the absence of a multi-year Local Government Finance settlement, and it is anticipated that work delivered through the transformation programme will contribute to reducing this reliance over time. It is likely that some of the current proposals will not be delivered or will be delivered within a longer or shorter timescale or to a greater or lesser financial impact.

We have a strong track record for delivering efficiencies and are confident that we can continue to do so, despite the challenges ahead. The new Director of Transformation and Change will be picking up the review of efficiencies and aligning it with the Transformation plans across the Council.

The 2020/21 [Statement of Accounts \(SOA\)](#) is the most recent to have been signed off by the external auditors (April 2024) owing to the delays nationally caused by lack of resources at the major audit firms and the Infrastructure Assets issue which is now resolved. Wyre has always met its statutory deadlines for publishing the draft accounts (one of only three in Lancashire to meet the deadline in 2023) but sadly we too have been impacted by the national issues and Deloitte have acknowledged their culpability in this. At the time of writing, we are on track to meet the 31 May deadline again this year and subject to the backstop arrangements, still to be agreed by central government, we expect our new auditors, KPMG, will be on site later in the summer to start our 2023/24 audit.

# Our Plans

Linked to the development of the Council's performance management framework, we are developing proposals to strengthen our approach to quarterly capital and revenue budget monitoring. The framework also sets out a slightly amended and high-level corporate plan and budget timeline. This will ensure our priorities are set first, so that the MTFP can be developed to clearly set out our financial context, budget position over the medium term, how the budget will enable delivery of our services and priorities and how we plan to balance the budget. It will provide a clear narrative that officers, Elected Members, residents, stakeholders and partners will understand. Moreover, we hope it will be a positive document to demonstrate and celebrate our strong financial management, as well as the difference we are making as a Council.

The new Assistant Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits (Deputy S.151) joined us recently and one of their priorities is to review the current Civica Financial system and determine the merits of, and options for, introducing a new consolidated financial ledger system and the potential for including cash receipting, payroll, HR and assets in one solution. Some demos have already taken place and we are in a two-year extension with Civica, so are hoping to make a decision fairly quickly. Co-ordinating the project with the Digital Transformation Board stakeholders and other projects linked to this ambition will be critical to ensure we maximise the potential opportunities.

The current ledger system is less automated than other, newer alternatives on the market and there is a high level of manual intervention that a change could help to reduce.

In the last couple of years, a Finance Business Partner (FBP) model has been introduced that aligns FBPs in the team to specific Directorate responsibilities. This makes it easy for colleagues internally to build a relationship with their designated FBP. It also means we are developing more detailed knowledge of specific services and specialisms within the Finance team so that a more bespoke service can be offered. The feedback has been excellent and this has been helped by the recruitment of strong FBPs, who are keen to develop their skills and support their service areas.

Procurement, with its links to the three Es of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness, is an essential part of the organisation's activities. It can range from small-scale procurement activity on a more business as usual scale, to much larger and more strategic contractual arrangements. Wyre Council has a full time Procurement Officer (PO) and where appropriate, we have utilised their expertise to support working with partners during the difficult period of high inflation for instance. The former postholder had particular knowledge and expertise in the energy sector and this was instrumental in establishing an innovative solution to the high fixed-price contract that the YMCA had entered into for electricity at the centres they run on our behalf.



Through discussion and negotiation with the energy supplier, we were able to effect a 'Change of Tenancy' arrangement when the prices dropped significantly, to be able to extract our assets from the contract the YMCA had entered into and move them across to our portfolio with much more advantageous rates. This saved thousands on the estimated bills and allowed us to continue to operate all five centres, where there had previously been concerns that we would need to rationalise the centres' opening times in response to this high unbudgeted cost. The new PO is continuing this good work and is in the process of making improvements to our energy consumption monitoring to reduce wastage across our key assets. They are also involved in major projects coming forward such as the impact of the new Environment Act, including the introduction of a separate food waste collection stream and whether there are elements that we can procure across Lancashire as a collective.

Following the launch of the Strategic Narrative in 2016, we introduced a more commercial approach, including training for all colleagues and embedded this as part of the Council's adopted values and behaviours/1-2-1 appraisal/recruitment processes. This mindset was something that all councils were being encouraged to embrace in response to austerity measures. We have balanced this 'private sector head/public sector heart' dynamic with Wyre's relatively low risk appetite. However, it has still allowed us to make efficiencies and savings without exposing us to some of the riskier endeavours that have resulted in mixed fortunes for other authorities. Colleagues have been empowered to fully use the procurement guide and all the commercial advice offered to help them structure their approaches and gain the best outcomes across quality and price, in particular.

The next challenge is to harmonise this with our Climate Change Strategy, building on the 'climate change wheel', which is helping to shape and inform decisions more effectively as we continue on our journey to net zero. An example of where we have chosen to pay more in order to improve our carbon footprint and make long-term savings is the decision, mentioned in full earlier in this document, to switch our fleet to HVO Fuel from April 2024.

## Examples of good practice that the LGA can share with the sector

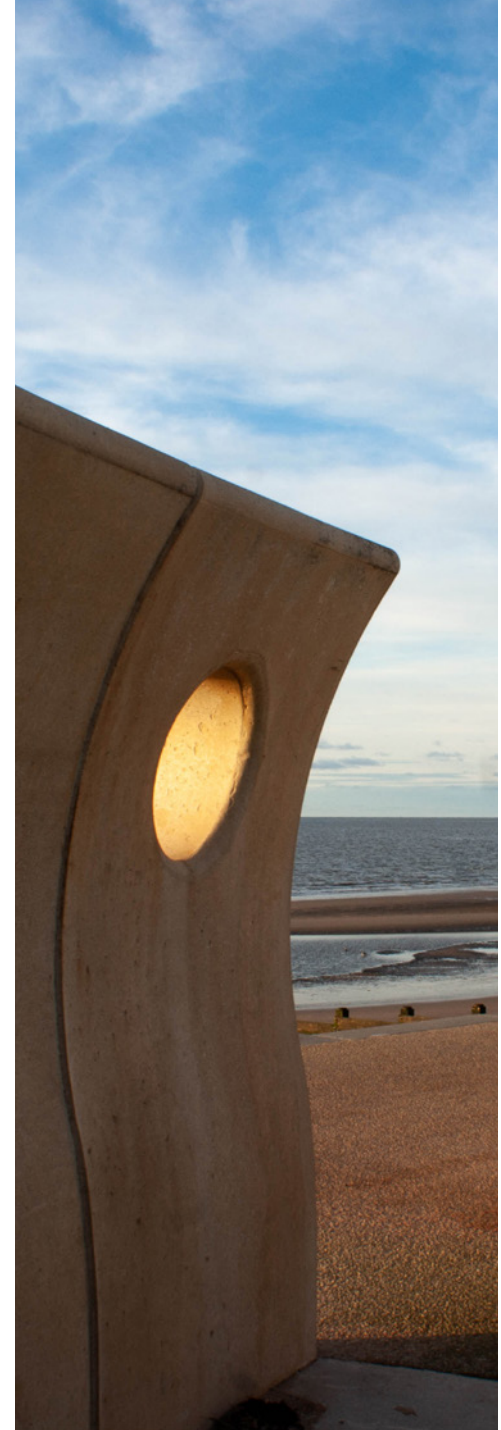
Wyre has been a member of the Lancashire Business Rates Pool since 2016/17, which in 2022/23 saw over £10m returned to those Lancashire authorities in the Pool (11 of 15) which would otherwise have been paid over to central government. This benefitted Wyre by £662,335 in 2022/23 (2020/21 it was £803,745 and in 2021/22 it amounted to £624,450).

We have a tradition of looking for a silver-lining in challenging times and the opportunity provided by the Truss economic era is a recent example. During October 2022, we were able to go 'debt free' and pay off our PWLB loans at a discount, saving over £70,000 and £1.9m in future interest payments.

For a number of years, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) have allowed Lancashire councils to pre-pay their pension contributions to take advantage of the better returns that the pension fund can make on their investments. At the 2020/21 to 2022/23 triennial review, the estimated saving to Wyre was £228,000 over the three years and by pre-paying under the previous three-year arrangement, we also saved on the deficit repayment which is no longer required, saving us more than £700,000 per annum. This remains the case.

Forthcoming savings for the 2023/24 to 2025/26 triennial review period on future service contribution rate are estimated at £400,000 per annum.

This saving has allowed us to invest in our workforce by redrawing the pay line for Grades 4 and above (approved April 2024), with the intention of addressing the current Strategic Risk around recruitment and retention. We have also made use of it to offset the cost of the recent SLT restructure (approved January 2024), which has allowed the creation of the new Transformation and Change Director role. This new post will support the new Council Plan and in particular the Innovative and Customer Focused strand and will strengthen the Council's approach to managing its budgets over the medium term.





# Component 5: Capacity for improvement

## Assessment of current position

We have strong foundations for change and improvement. Our workforce comprises just over 300 FTE colleagues with a turnover of 6.34% July 2023-March 2024. We have implemented a hybrid-working policy which 58% staff tell us is something they really value and one of the most important priorities to them in their job. It encourages colleagues to truly enjoy a positive work/life balance, supports employee retention, reduces their commuting cost and also helps reduce the Council's own carbon footprint.

Many colleagues who join us stay with us for a long time, building invaluable knowledge of the borough and Wyre Council. They take great pride in the work that they do and as such often go above and beyond to deliver services and support each other in high pressure or emergency events, such as the regular cycle of elections or sudden crises or flooding.

Employee surveys tell us that 84% of people feel the Council is a good organisation to work for and 79% are proud to work for us.



What this also means is that across many services we have an ageing workforce. We are working hard to develop effective succession plans to lessen the impact of losing such experienced officers as they retire in the coming years.

In 2021, budget was approved for up to five corporate apprentices to work across the Council gaining experience in different service areas whilst studying for a chartered manager's degree at the University of Lancaster. There are currently four apprentices on this scheme, entering their final year of study in September 2024. The remaining and ongoing budget will be utilised through a mix of corporate apprentices and specific apprentices depending on need. Other apprentices work in Building Control, ICT, Engineering, Grounds Maintenance and Transport. These positions have been instigated to manage succession planning within those areas in recognition of skills shortages and our ageing workforce.

Recruitment is a challenge for Wyre, as indeed it is nationally; however, our location and the limits it places on travel and commuting times does create a particular/ unique challenge for us. In addition, salary levels for Lancashire are lower in comparison with other areas, and within Lancashire, Wyre's salary levels have been known to be towards the low end as well. This has impacted on both our recruitment and retention, with many examples of valued colleagues leaving Wyre to carry out exactly the same job for a higher wage at a neighbouring or nearby authority.

To start to address this we have recently implemented a payline review which approved pay increases for 274 colleagues of between 1.84% and 5.12% as well as making a minor change to flexitime allowances. The cost to the Council was £400,000 which was, in the main, funded through savings on pension contributions as mentioned earlier in this document.

These strong foundations are now being used as a basis for delivering a step-change in ambitions for the place and organisation following recent changes in officer and political leadership.

We see the agreement of the Council Plan as Wyre's next chapter and we are looking to move at pace, build on our strong foundations and financial position and renew our drive to transform the excellent services we provide to our residents, businesses and visitors.

The SLT review included the creation of a new Directorate responsible for transformation and change, bringing together all the service areas key to developing and effectively delivering transformation. Including:

- Policy, Intelligence and Change;
- Communications and Visitor Economy;
- HR and Organisational Development;
- ICT;
- Contact Centre and Corporate Systems;
- Economic Development; and
- Theatres.

## Component 5: **Capacity for improvement**

### Assessment of current position

In addition to changes to the Council structure, we have worked very closely with our colleagues at Wyre to develop new Values and Behaviours. These values are:



**Professional**



**Innovative**



**Collaborative**



**Customer focused**

The values we hold are at the centre of everything that we aim to achieve; they are behind the decisions that we take, the way we act and the way that we treat others.

They are the personal qualities that we look for in our teams to help us deliver an effective service to all of our customers. Therefore, it is important that they are used to aid our recruitment and selection, training and development and performance management.

Communications colleagues have created a new job description template which also incorporate the person spec and of course these values and behaviours.

Our 1-2-1+ discussion documents have also been redesigned and updated to enable constructive conversations around our values and behaviours. We held breakout sessions with colleagues during a Listening Event where we asked what the values did and did not look like to them. Both the positive and negative that came through this will be used to aid these future discussions.



In April 2024 an initial workshop was held with SLT to look at our transformation successes to date, current projects and future opportunities. Current projects underway include:

- Legal Service Review
- Accommodation Review
- Reographics Review
- Licensing, Environmental Health, Planning, Building Control moving towards paperless processes and mobile apps
- Customer Reporting – e.g. ‘Fix My Street’ type solution
- Asset Management Strategy and Review
- Building Control – Shared Services
- Root and branch review of Estates/Asset management
- Review of Theatres
- Preparations for New Leisure Contract

The Leader and Chief Executive also attended a set of Transformation Workshops between January and March, organised by the Local Government Association to learn about other local authorities’ approaches to Transformation in readiness for the new Director starting.

In our November 2023 staff survey (69% response rate), colleagues were also asked what the best things were about Wyre Council and areas they could improve:

#### The best things about working for Wyre Council:



Staff particularly value their **colleagues** in their individual teams



**Flexible working** and the positive impact this has on work-life balance is also highly valued by many



For some, the best thing is the **variety of work** and the **satisfaction** they take from providing a good service



There are also staff who value the **working environment** facilities and location

#### Areas for improvement:



Staff were most likely to comment on pay, feeling their **pay** is low when compared to equivalent posts in other authorities and does not reflect the level of responsibility or the workload



Some mention that they would like more **opportunities to progress** and more **training**



Others would like to see more **collaboration between teams**

# Our Plans

The new Transformation Directorate has been formed and the new Director of Transformation and Change joined us in late April 2024. Her initial priorities include:

- Developing a Transformation Strategy to effectively co-ordinate and manage organisational transformation to deliver the aims of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, our corporate priorities and improve services;
- Developing a Transformation Programme which will set out how the Transformation Strategy will be delivered, prioritising work across various themes such as: digital, customer, service reviews, spend reviews and delivery model. The Transformation Programme will include high level estimates of the investment capacity needed as well as an indication of the benefits and cashable savings to be achieved;
- Establishing a cross-cutting Transformation Board to oversee the delivery of the Transformation Strategy and Programme. The board will also receive business cases for projects and provide challenge and support;
- Reviewing and refreshing the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy guided by best practice. It will cover elements such as hardware, software, infrastructure, security, integration, AI, data and intelligence;
- Exploring shared service opportunities, initially focusing on opportunities with Fylde Council;
- Developing an Economic and Visitor Economy Strategy;
- Developing an Organisational Development Plan/ Workforce Strategy and introducing a management/ leadership development programme. Additional funding was approved in the budget setting process for training and development and further proposals to increase capacity and budget for this area are being developed;
- Shaping the new Directorate to ensure capacity to deliver our Transformation Strategy and Transformation Programme;
- Developing a Transformation Communications and Engagement Plan to bring colleagues, both in the office and out in our satellite sites, with us on our transformation journey;
- Updating our corporate Communications Plan to include a greater focus and investment in internal communications and employee engagement;
- Working across all areas of the Council to develop innovative systems and approaches; and
- Overseeing the Council Plan refresh in Summer/ Autumn 2024.

Other ongoing areas of work include:

- Embedding new values and behaviours;
- Programme of Listening Days, regular Core Briefs and more opportunities for colleagues to have their say.
- Succession planning project;
- Cyber 360 review in 2025;
- Refreshed Service Planning process;
- Development and roll out of new performance management framework;
- Creation of Council Plan Project Managers Core Group and Community of Practice; and
- Building our support network through attendance at key events including LGA round tables, Sector Conferences and the LGA conference.





