

Council Plan

Update 2015/16

Foreword

Welcome to this update to our Council Plan where we look back on what we have achieved over the last year and look ahead to the council's priorities for this year.

It has undoubtedly been an extremely challenging twelve months and 2015-16 is set to be even tougher as we are forced to make a further £45 million of Government cuts to balance our books.

But despite facing budget cuts like never before there is still much for Derbyshire to be optimistic about, and as a council our core values are steadfast.

We will do everything we can to protect frontline services for the elderly and disabled people and children at risk of harm or neglect. We will champion the county, our heritage, our people and our environment. And we will work hard to bring new businesses to Derbyshire and help existing ones to grow and prosper and create more jobs.

We are here to serve the people of Derbyshire and that means listening to what people say and understanding what they need from their council. We welcome your views on this document or any aspect of council services by contacting policy@derbyshire.gov.uk

Cllr Anne Western
Leader of the Council

Ian Stephenson
Chief Executive

A strong economy

Whilst there are signs that the Derbyshire economy is growing, levels of unemployment in a number of communities and amongst the young and long term unemployed remain a concern. Improving the opportunities available for local people, working with businesses to create jobs and securing additional investment into the county remain a priority. Working with partners to establish and realise the potential of the Combined Authority will also be key in enabling a more integrated approach to transport, housing and skills development in the future.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Identified and agreed priorities to drive forward economic growth through the Derbyshire Economic Strategy which provides a framework for joint working with partners across the county.
- Submitted proposals to central government to establish a Combined Authority so that councils in Derbyshire can act as one authority to secure investment and improve economic regeneration and transport.
- Secured further investment of over £22 million for Markham Vale Business and Development Park, creating new business development opportunities and improving job and career prospects.
- Committed £50,000 to support workplaces and tourism businesses to reduce energy costs, helping them to develop their own sustainable travel infrastructure.
- Supported 126 businesses to grow and created jobs through the Global Derbyshire Small Business Support programme.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Establish and exploit the potential of the Combined Authority, working with partners to secure resources and agree future organisational arrangements.
- Maximise income from external funding sources to support key projects and programmes across the county.
- Coordinate the delivery of the Derbyshire Economic Strategy, completing the development and roll out of the Economic Framework.
- Secure additional inward investment, new businesses and jobs onto Markham Vale, maximising the benefit of enterprise zone status through the Sheffield City region.
- Provide support to businesses in traditional and developing industries such as the visitor economy, creative industries, heritage, food and drink and high technology manufacturing sectors.
- Encourage employers in Derbyshire to adopt the living wage.
- Develop a progressive approach to procurement to maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities from every pound that is spent.

Well connected communities

Developing long term solutions to bring roads, bridges and traffic systems of economic importance up to standard and investing more in footway and cycleway repairs is a key priority. Whilst good progress has been made over the last year, keeping all roads at the standard we would like, even with substantial new investment, continues to be a significant challenge. Making it easier for people to work over a wider area by improving transport links will be essential in connecting local people to jobs, Investment in the county's broadband infrastructure, to support the future economic prosperity of the county, will also continue to be a priority.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Secured £2.9 million of funding to repair road damage caused by severe rainfall and flooding.
- Improved our winter gritting service by securing investment for 15 replacement gritters/snow ploughs.
- Secured £12.8 million of funding for the A61 Whittington Moor roundabout and contribution for the Seymour Link, Markham.
- Approved a £23 million strategy for the accelerated highways maintenance programme to provide a well maintained road and transport network.
- Approved a £24 million invest to save strategy for LED street lighting and column replacement, which will cut future maintenance and electricity costs.
- Taken a lead role on Derbyshire's response to consultation on proposals for HS2.
- Supported 645,000 Community Transport passenger journeys.
- Rolled out the Digital Derbyshire programme to over 25,000 properties.
- Actively promoted a cycling culture in the county through Cycle Derbyshire, L'Eroica, the Summer of Cycling and Tour de France campaigns.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Improve the county's highway network by implementing the £23 million Accelerated Maintenance Programme,
- Implement the LED street lighting replacement programme.
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on Derbyshire's roads by working with partners across the county.
- Reduce the risk of flooding in the county by working with partner organisations to increase understanding and ensuring a coordinated response to flood risk management.
- Review priorities for the provision of public transport in Derbyshire and develop a Public Transport Strategy that delivers an accessible public transport service.
- Open a new railway station in Ilkeston
- Ensure more households in the county have access to broadband, through the further roll out of Digital Derbyshire.
- Undertake the second phase of the Superfast Extension Programme to deliver broadband to underserved, typically rural, areas.
- Implement the new highway permit scheme, minimising disruption to road users by ensuring all works carried out by utility companies, and the Council itself, are managed in an appropriate and timely way.

A skilled and confident workforce

Businesses need people with the right skills, experience and qualifications, now and in the future, to prosper and grow. Supporting our resident workforce to improve their skills levels, qualifications and numeracy is essential, however significant challenges remain. Youth unemployment in Derbyshire is still too high and young people are being disproportionately affected by the recent economic downturn. Making sure that people have the skills they need to take advantage of opportunities through our work with schools, by helping adults with learning disabilities to get voluntary or paid employment and through our contribution to skills and training for adults is a top priority.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Increased the number of young people in education, employment and training.
- Successfully delivered two Apprentice Grants for Employers (AGE) to stimulate the creation of apprenticeships in the private sector.
- Financially supported 226 private sector businesses employing 242 young people through apprenticeship schemes
- Fulfilled our commitment to create 500 internal apprenticeship opportunities.
- Established a Young People's Skills and Employment Board to support the transition of young people into education, training and employment.
- Organised several Skills Festivals attracting over 11,000 young people, 80 organisations and over 55 separate 'have a go' events.
- Successfully bid to deliver the National Careers Service (NCS) contract.
- Supported children in care who are identified as work ready, four of which are currently employed within an apprenticeship role within the Council.
- Delivered introductory ICT help sessions in libraries and targeted individual ICT assistance to those claiming benefits and seeking work.
- Held over 200 one-to-one ICT sessions in libraries serving areas with high levels of unemployment.
- Continued to improve the knowledge and skills of those who support families through the introduction of a new way of working.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Work with partners to complete the development of the new Skills Strategy for Young People in Derbyshire.
- Provide a further 100 apprenticeships to better equip the Council to meet its future workforce requirements and to maximise opportunities for those individuals leaving care
- Ensure activity meets the identified needs of all young people, particularly those with special educational needs, children with disabilities and looked after children, and disabled adults, seeking to enter the labour market or education/training.
- Ensure the Council's activity is aligned and linked into the work of the Derbyshire Economic Strategy and the D2 Employment Skills Board.
- Support the work of the Combined Authority, developing a strong approach around skills and employment applicable to resident and employer needs.
- Influence and develop enterprise education in supporting entrepreneurial skills in young people.
- Meet the Council's needs as an employer and respond to the challenges of an ageing workforce.

Healthier communities with reduced health inequalities

Derbyshire faces the continued challenge of increasing demand for health and social care services while budgets shrink. Pressures on health services over the winter have been managed well, which in large part is due to the excellent social care services in the county. Working with partners, we will continue to better integrate services around the whole needs of people, preventing crisis and reducing the number of hospital admissions. Tackling health inequality also remains a top priority and we will focus on supporting healthy communities, working in areas such as tobacco control, alcohol abuse and healthy eating.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Agreed priorities as part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy refresh.
- Signed up to the Local Government declaration on Tobacco Control and agreed a number of key actions to focus effort.
- Agreed a plan to help deliver more person centred care and to reduce emergency hospital admissions with partners.
- Allocated funding to deliver agreed public health plans across eight localities.
- Secured funding for local voluntary sector services which meet health and social care needs.
- Trained mental health champions to promote mental wellbeing and reduce the stigma associated with mental health.
- Launched the Heart of Derbyshire campaign to increase the range of healthy options and healthy food available to people in Derbyshire.
- Established health and wellbeing zones in 26 libraries.
- Provided free school meals to all infant school children and commissioned healthy lifestyle programmes for all junior school pupils in Derbyshire.
- Increased the number of children receiving dental check-ups and refocused dental health promotions.
- Been awarded the UNICEF breast feeding friendly award.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Work with partners to develop new models of whole person care across Derbyshire.
- Agree a joint approach to funding the voluntary sector for the delivery of health and social care services with NHS partners across the county.
- Continue to implement the Healthy Communities' model which aims to create caring and supportive environments for all ages, with a focus on healthy living.
- Tackle liver disease in the county by developing a targeted programme of work.
- Improve health outcomes by finding new ways to build social capital in local communities.
- Implement the tobacco control plan to create a smoke free Derbyshire.
- Improve access to early intervention and crisis prevention services for people with mental ill health, implementing the Crisis Care Concordat with partners.
- Improve children's mental health and wellbeing including promoting E-safety and reducing self-harm and suicide

Resilient and safe communities

With overall crime rates falling and remaining low over recent years, Derbyshire continues to be one of the safest counties in the country. Protecting vulnerable people across the county continues to be a priority. Working with our partners we will develop an integrated approach to the crisis support given to victims of crime and domestic violence. Additionally, we will offer support to protect local residents from rogue traders and illegal sales. We will also work with partners to better understand and tackle the emerging threat of organised immigration crime, exploitation and human trafficking.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Reduced the number of young people entering the youth justice system and supported adults and young people away from re-offending.
- Provided immediate crisis support to identified victims of human trafficking and exploitation.
- Continued to raise young people's awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Delivered training to schools to prevent violent extremism and to front line professionals to raise awareness of counter terrorism.
- Identified options for the provision of support for victims of hate crime.
- Achieved leading national compliance rates for the under-age sale of alcohol by supporting businesses and taking enforcement action.
- Taken significant enforcement action to prosecute and disrupt criminals selling illicit tobacco products.
- Supported over 600 children at risk of abuse and 9,000 families in need of help.
- Worked to maximise opportunities to provide health interventions, where substance misuse impacts on crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Tackled problem pubs and clubs resulting in a reduction in alcohol related violence and anti-social behaviour.
- Placed responsibility for domestic abuse services in one department to improve coordination and accountability
- Supported local businesses who do a good job at a fair price by maintaining the Trusted Trader scheme.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to identify gaps in service provision and to provide better support to victims.
- Work with partners in the county to tackle organised crime, particularly cyber-crime, human trafficking and child sexual exploitation.
- Develop a joint strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse, including the re-procurement of integrated support services for victims of domestic abuse.
- Work with NHS partners to re-commission the Sexual Assault Referral Centre service, which supports victims of rape and serious sexual violence.
- Work in partnership to address the offending behaviour of the most prolific and other priority offenders, including provision of support for those who want to work with agencies to reduce their offending.
- Take the lead on reducing illegal tobacco and underage sales and support the Derbyshire Tobacco Alliance.
- Establish a single point of access, "Starting Point" for a range of children's services, including services which safeguard children from harm.

People supported in hard times

Wide variations in the level of poverty and economic prosperity across the county are still all too obvious. Ongoing changes to the welfare system and the cost of everyday goods and services mean that many families are still struggling to cope. Increasing demand for emergency financial support and food parcels is a key concern for the Council and partner agencies. Working with partners, we will continue to deliver a co-ordinated and strategic response to the growing levels of poverty affecting communities in Derbyshire focussing effort on improving financial inclusion and capability, reducing fuel poverty and supporting those families most at risk.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Developed an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Derbyshire, to co-ordinate activity and to reduce duplication of effort and resource.
- Provided additional funding for food banks and 35 donation points in the county.
- Commissioned the Local Authorities Energy Partnership to improve heating in vulnerable households.
- Provided emergency financial through the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund to experiencing a financial crisis.
- Successfully campaigned for continued funding for the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund in 2015/16.
- Provided additional funding to local Credit Unions to offer residents cheap, low cost loans.
- Continued to provide specialist, community based welfare rights advice through our Welfare Rights Service and Benefits Helpline.
- Ensured debt advice is available in 98 GP surgeries in Derbyshire and all the county's Children's Centres.
- Blocked access to payday loan companies' websites on Council computers.
- Established regular advice sessions in a range of communities to build financial reliance amongst residents in Derbyshire.
- Provided advice and support to 2,397 families through access to CAB in Children's Centres

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Continue our support for food banks and explore other sustainable solutions to address food poverty.
- Maximise household income working with partners across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.
- Continue work with partners to tackle fuel poverty.
- Further promote and support Credit Unions in the county and ensure people have access to the help and advice they need.
- Build up intelligence about illegal money lending in Derbyshire and work with the national Illegal Money Lending Team and the Police and Crime Commissioner to tackle this practice.
- Campaign for on-going national Government support for local welfare provision in Derbyshire.
- Encourage employers in Derbyshire to adopt the Living Wage.

Sustainable and green communities

Derbyshire has a unique and diverse landscape and protecting, promoting and improving its heritage and environment remains a key priority. In order to prepare Derbyshire for a changing environment, we will continue to work with partners in developing and implementing a consistent countywide response to the damaging effects of climate change and become more resilient to flooding. We will encourage our residents to improve recycling rates and further reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill making Derbyshire a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in which to live and work. Building on the success of last year's cycling events we will promote and support opportunities enabling residents and visitors to participate in community and cultural activities.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Adopted the Council's new Environment Policy to focus efforts to protect and enhance the environment and to encourage sustainable economic regeneration.
- Joined the Local Authority Energy collaboration partnership to develop joint working between national and local stakeholders on the green energy agenda.
- Diverted 17,000 tonnes of extra waste from landfill in 2014, and increased recycling and composting rates.
- Started construction on a new state-of-the-art waste treatment facility and education centre in Derby to avoid sending unrecyclable waste to landfill
- Commenced processing waste at the Arkwright composting facility
- Continued work to reduce carbon emissions across the Council estate including installing solar panels on a range of Council buildings and installing LED lighting in Council depots and in bus shelters across the county.
- Supported more than 400,000 attendances at arts events in community venues across the county.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Reduce energy usage through the implementation of the LED replacement programme for street lights.
- Encourage recycling and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill through the implementation of a sustainable waste management strategy,
- Promote and protect Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.
- Deliver the Derbyshire Climate Change Charter.
- Work with Local Nature Partnerships to ensure that the value of the natural environment is embedded in local decision making.
- Explore and develop further opportunities for green energy, such as solar farms, across Derbyshire.
- Extend the use of solar panels as far as possible across the Derbyshire estate, including schools.
- Continue to identify and implement carbon reduction projects across the Council's estate.
- Work with partners to secure the future of historic buildings such as Buxton Crescent and Elvaston Castle.
- Deliver the Made in Derbyshire 2015 campaign, in partnership with Culture Derbyshire, to celebrate all that is made in Derbyshire.

Thriving children, young people and families

Keeping our children safe and healthy continues to be at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to support families in difficulty so that children can remain with their own families wherever possible, whilst furthering improving our fostering and adoption services, and the quality of children's homes. As corporate parents, we will do all we can to ensure children thrive while they are in our care. We have worked hard with schools to improve attainment levels and the overall quality of schools and this will continue to be a top priority.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Increased the proportion of children and young people being cared for in a fostering placement and significantly reduced the number waiting to be adopted.
- Maintained a comparatively low number of children in care ensuring children and young people are helped to stay at home wherever possible.
- Improved outcomes for children in care through increasing attendance at school, improving attainment and reducing the proportion of children in care offending.
- Increased the number of children and young people receiving early years funding with over 25,000 children enjoying early year's places.
- Improved outcomes for over 1,000 families in Derbyshire through our Troubled Families Programme.
- Improved the overall effectiveness of Derbyshire schools being judged to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and supported Derbyshire schools to increase the attainment of pupils in Derbyshire across all key stages.
- Delivered activity sessions to over 8,000 children through our Youth Service.
- Promoted literacy skills through public library events and secured funding to provide activities for children as part of the Summer Reading Challenge.
- Improved the condition of our schools and continued investment in new school buildings, including work on a new primary school at North Wingfield.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Further improve the number of good and outstanding schools within Derbyshire particularly at secondary level
- Improve attainment at all key stages, with particular focus on GCSE attainment.
- Continue to implement the Troubled Families Programme to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people and to effect sustainable change.
- Further improve outcomes for children in care and other vulnerable groups.
- Increase the number of 2 year olds accessing funded education.
- Establish "Starting Point" in Children's Centres as a single point of access for a range of children's services.
- Strengthen transition planning across health, education, adult care and children's services.
- Support the development of sport and physical activity particularly for young people who are under achieving and young people in care.
- Continue to improve our school estate and work across the Council to ensure that school places are available where they are needed.

Independent and supported older people

We continue to work hard to meet the challenge of supporting older people when they need us in the face of significantly reduced social care budgets. We are striving to provide integrated, high quality care and support, working closely with local health partners and the voluntary and community sector. We will continue to implement our accommodation strategy which aims to give older people the choice they deserve, when it is no longer possible to live at home. We are also improving our support and care for people with dementia and their families.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Worked more closely with the NHS and improved our support services so that more vulnerable and older people are able to live independently.
- Reduced the number of people who are permanently admitted to nursing and residential care.
- Continued to minimise delays for people who are ready to return home or transfer to another form of care but still occupy a hospital bed.
- Improved the quality of care for people with Dementia by refurbishing four council homes for older people to make them dementia-friendly.
- Helped people with Dementia to remain in their own homes longer, whilst also supporting their carers, by improving support services.
- Opened an Extra Care housing scheme to provide apartments with on-site support for older people to be independent in the Chesterfield area.
- Increased the multi-agency focus on reducing falls in older people which has a potentially serious detrimental impact on their physical and mental health.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Meet our obligations under the Care Act 2014 so that individuals and their carers are provided with integrated, high quality care and support.
- Work more closely with local health services to deliver the Better Care Fund which creates a pooled budgets and places people's well-being as the focus of health and care services.
- Continue to implement the Derbyshire Dementia Strategy to better support people with dementia and their carers to live well.
- Introduce a new set of Dementia Care Standards with local private care home providers that we contract with.
- Open further Extra Care schemes in Alfreton, Clay Cross and Long Eaton to provide independent living accommodation with on-site support for older people to be independent.
- Open two Community Care Centres, to provide residential care, day services and other wellbeing facilities in Darley Dale and Heanor.
- Continue to reduce loneliness and social isolation by ensuring there are befriending opportunities and activities available throughout Derbyshire.
- Establish a statutory Adult Safeguarding Board with partners to better protect vulnerable adults.

Adults with physical and learning disabilities leading independent and fulfilled lives

Ensuring that disabled adults are able to take greater control of, and lead full and active, lives in their local communities is a priority for the Council. Working with partners, we will ensure that all adults with physical and learning disabilities in Derbyshire have access to flexible, high quality services when they need them. We will support the most vulnerable people in the community to stay safe and thrive and improve our support to carers, recognising the significant role they play.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Completed the Learning and Disability Accommodation and Support Strategy.
- Reduced waiting times for property adaptations for people with disabilities and their families.
- Supported individuals to move from hospital settings outside of Derbyshire to community based accommodation within the County as part of the Transforming Care programme.
- Provided appropriate support to vulnerable people, helping them to continue to live in their own homes.
- Secured the future of Bolsover Woodlands Enterprise.
- Provided support so that people with a range of disabilities can access paid employment.
- Carried out a consultation on the provision of fully accessible toilet and changing facilities (Changing Places) to allow people with complex and multiple disabilities to enjoy community life and days out in the same way as everyone else.
- Supported the Keeping Safe Project which aims to stop the bullying and abuse of people with learning disabilities and help them to stay safe.
- Signed up to the Deaf Charter.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Continue to reduce the inappropriate use of residential and nursing care by developing a wider range of housing options.
- Support more individuals to move from inappropriate hospital settings to local community based accommodation (Transforming Care programme), in partnership with NHS commissioners.
- Develop a new strategy for Carers to support them in their caring role.
- Roll out the Hate Crime and Staying Safe project for people with learning difficulties to new locations across Derbyshire, and increase the number of Safe Places in Derbyshire.
- Increase public awareness of Changing Places facilities in Derbyshire.
- Promote access to leisure opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Undertake a strategic review of services for blind and visually impaired people to determine the scope of sensory services in the future.
- Increase the number of Dignity Challenge bronze and silver award holders.
- Increase the number of high quality inclusive and dedicated opportunities available to disabled adults to take part in sport and physical activity.

An ambitious and dynamic Council

Despite unprecedented cuts to our budget and increasing demand for services, we have worked hard to ensure the Council is able to meet the challenges ahead and to deliver our priorities for the people of Derbyshire. We have put in place plans to achieve the savings we need to make and have ensured that limited resources are allocated fairly. Significant progress has been made in reshaping the Council so that it is more streamlined, flexible and efficient. Promoting innovation and more joined up working with partners, to improve services to communities and to release savings, will continue to be priorities in the coming year.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Delivered a balanced budget for 2014/15 and identified proposals to cut the Council's budget by a further £45m in the year ahead.
- Identified new ways of delivering services which will release savings to mitigate against the impact of significantly reduced budgets, through the Derbyshire Challenge Fund.
- Launched the Council's Innovation Strategy to promote a creative approach to service delivery, and to ensure learning from innovation is disseminated across the Council.
- Developed the Council's approach to community budgets through Thriving Families, identifying new models for delivering services in, and with, local communities.
- Streamlined the senior management structure, saving £2 million.
- Worked with public, private and voluntary sector partners to maximise opportunities for joint working, including the co-location and co-delivery of services.
- Developed the Council's approach to customer segmentation to ensure services and assets are in the right places to meet community needs.
- Provided a diverse programme of performances, events and festivals to celebrate the county's diversity.
- Implemented workforce strategies to ensure staff are flexible, adaptable and can meet the future needs of Derbyshire.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Continue to maximise income and grants and promote the 'Fairer Deal for Derbyshire' campaign to ensure that the Council is funded fairly.
- Maximise benefits from the Derbyshire Challenge Fund and further support the delivery of the Council's Innovation Strategy.
- Implement new Thriving Families service models in Cotmanhay, rolling out the approach in Gamesley, Danesmoor and Shirebrook.
- Work with partners to reshape and join up services in local communities.
- Extend the Council's approach to customer segmentation, ensuring that it is used in the review and redesign of services
- Support staff and further develop their skills to ensure high quality services are maintained.
- Review how corporate services functions are provided to maximise value for money.

Communities at the heart of decision making

We want communities to be at the heart of decision making, so that they have more involvement in the decisions that affect their lives. We have strengthened the role of local councillors in their communities, and have worked hard to improve the way we communicate with, and involve, local people. We will continue to support communities to thrive and will continue to improve our strong network of libraries, recognising the important role they play in local areas. We will place a high priority on devolving decision making and budgets and continue to look creatively at ways we can deliver more of our services at a local level.

Over the last twelve months we have:

- Engaged with local people through our 8 local area committees, enabling decision making to be transparent and local.
- Supported local councillors to fulfil their role as community leaders.
- Undertaken a comprehensive programme of engagement and consultation to support decision making and promoted inclusive consultation processes.
- Improved the involvement of disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, carers, and people with learning disabilities in the Council's decision making.
- Worked with Derbyshire Older People's Action Group to identify solutions and new and better ways of working with reduced budgets.
- Involved local communities in reshaping services in new and innovative ways, through our Thriving Families project, and trained Council staff to take up these new approaches.
- Promoted libraries as the focal point of local communities and further improved the range of information and advice services available to local people.
- Increased the range of free eBooks, eAudiobooks & eMagazines available to all users of Derbyshire libraries so that our library services reach the wider community.
- Developed a new communications strategy, launched a fortnightly electronic newsletter for residents and improved our use of social media to engage with residents.
- Created local area profiles and the "Derbyshire Quilt" to better understand the challenges affecting communities across the county.
- Improved access to information about Derbyshire for the Council, partners and the public by redeveloping the Derbyshire Observatory.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will be to:

- Make further progress in devolving budgets to the lowest level.
- Improve the effectiveness of our local area committees, enabling local councillors to better respond to the issues and concerns of local people.
- Continue to consult and engage with local people, and seek more opportunities to involve communities in designing and shaping services in their local area.
- Explore ways of delivering Council services at a local level.
- Open a new library in Heanor, develop plans for a new library in Belper, and improve broadband speeds to further support libraries to be the hub of local communities.
- Improve our understanding of the needs and challenges affecting communities across the county and the difference our services are making.