



ANNUAL REVIEW **2005/06**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

This section gives us the opportunity to report back to you with some of the key performance information relating to the previous years' activities. The Annual Review section will let you see year on year how we are performing and also assure you that we are working to improve on performance on a continual basis.

The year 2005/06 saw quite a few changes. It was the year that Mr John Stevenson retired from office as Town Clerk & Chief Executive of Limavady Borough Council, after 21 years at the helm. Having just completed my own first year in the Chief Executive position, I would like to pay tribute to John for his years of service and the many achievements for the Borough brought about in his time.

2005/06 saw the working through of a comprehensive review of Council's management and the introduction of a new management structure, with a new Senior Management Team coming into place during the year. This coincided also with an election bringing some new Councillors to the Chamber. The rate of change in Council continued with a review of our systems of governance leading to a number of new initiatives including:

- the appointment of Internal Auditors to review, monitor and make recommendations on Council's various financial and management practices to ensure probity and that sound systems are in place
- the establishment of an Audit Committee with an independent Chairperson to scrutinise and review all audit reports and ensure accountability in the conduct of Council's affairs
- the establishment of a 'Whistleblowing' policy to strengthen our anti-fraud measures
- the working through of a new Council Communication Plan

In the year 2005/06 I am pleased to report that despite so much change in Council staff and structures, over 70% of all business objectives were achieved. The year also saw Council officers getting involved in the policy preparation for the incoming Review of Public Administration in local government and while this is very much work in progress we shall attempt to influence the development of the process to ensure the Borough area is not adversely affected by this enormous change in local administration.

Finally, I would like to thank all our stakeholders who have assisted in many ways to bring about Council's achievements, not least our elected members, staff, partners and members of the public.

THE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

2005/2006 was a year which saw significant changes within Council and the emergence of the Development Directorate. In addition to the completion of a number of key projects and initiatives, wheels were set in motion for much of the work scheduled to be delivered during 2006/2007.

Council has embraced the ethos of Good Relations by completing a Council Good Relations Strategy, and, with support from the PEACE II programme, has now appointed a full time Good Relations Officer. Our first ever Good Relations workplan has been held up as a model of best practice across Northern Ireland.

Community activity has continued to develop with Council taking a proactive role in appointing a full time Community Development Officer and supporting in the establishment of Limavady Community Forum. Funding was also secured from the PEACE II programme for a Community Business Development Officer who will work with community and voluntary organizations to develop the social economy. A Community Safety Programme has been completed.

On the economic development front approximately £140,000 has been secured through partnership with Roe Valley Rural Development. Eleven new units have been fitted out in partnership with Roe Valley Enterprises and a promotional DVD and TV advertising campaign were also delivered.

On the leisure scene, the most significant development has been the upgrading of fitness facilities at Roe Valley Leisure Centre. Over the period July 2005 to March 2006 fitness suite usage at the Leisure Centre increased by over 70% over the same period in 2004/2005. At the end of March 2006 membership of the fitness suite totaled around 700.

In anticipation of the new Civic Centre, Council has continued to support arts and cultural events in a number of ways. Piano and instrumental competitions have taken place and provided a forum to encourage and display the talents of the Borough's young, aspiring musicians of the future. Art Exhibitions have been ongoing to showcase the artistic talents that have evolved from art tutoring classes offered by Council throughout the spring and autumn. Council continues to

support the ever popular Jazz and Blues and Folk Festivals. The Northern Ireland Events Company and local businesses worked in partnership with Council to support the Danny Boy Festival, a celebration of the connection between the Borough and the world famous song. The festival embraced aspects of music, sport and fun- filled community events and was a huge success with increased visitor numbers and overnight stays in the Borough.

Partnership has played a key role in many of the initiatives delivered throughout the year. The Lough Foyle Car Ferry from Magilligan to Greencastle, which began operating in June 2002, celebrated its 1 millionth passenger in July 2005. As a joint initiative between Limavady and Donegal County Councils it has made a significant contribution to tourism in the North West Region.

The Council was also successful in receiving funding under the Natural Rural Resource Tourism Scheme through the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust for the provision of a boardwalk to minimise the negative visitor impact on the sand dunes at Benone Beach and, in addition, through Sperrins Tourism for the signage of the North Sperrins scenic routes and associated interpretive panels at scenic sites in the south of the Borough.

SUPPORT SERVICES DIRECTORATE

(a) Reorganisation

In 2005/06 Council embarked on a process of reorganisation which resulted in a reduction of Council departments and the establishment of three Directorates; Development, Environmental Services and Support Services.

The implementation, which was adopted on the basis of various recommendations, resulted in major changes and the amalgamation of Council services. Many of the services delivered by the Council are statutory and regulatory services with which the Council is charged with a legal duty to deliver. It was essential therefore that the necessary resources and structures were put in place to ensure the continued effective and efficient delivery of those services.

The new structure continues to offer opportunities for improved cross-service working and sharing of resources to help maintain and improve service delivery.

(b) Building Employee Capacity

In order to promote excellence in employee development practices Council continues to work towards the achievement of the Investors in people accreditation. A process of annual employee development and review has been introduced to ensure employee development is aligned with the objectives set by the Council in its Corporate Plan.

(c) Recruitment & selection

Recruitment activity is closely monitored to ensure the replacement of positions key to the effective delivery of services. During the 2005/06 period a total of 46 recruitment campaigns took place ensuring the timely replacement of relevant full time, part time, fixed term and temporary posts. A total of 883 applications were made in response to these posts.

(d) Absence Levels

Ongoing activities and initiatives were driven to ensure a strong focus and emphasise is placed on reducing employee absenteeism. In 2005/06 a health & wellbeing audit was offered and Council continues to focus on the results and promote healthy working initiatives with external organisations.

Absenteeism levels and carefully monitored to ensure ongoing reductions are achieved.

(e) Financial Information

(Information on Net Cost of Services 2005/06 and Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2006 was included in Excel form and as a pie chart)

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

(a) Building Control Section

Councils Building Control service is committed to protecting people and the environment by ensuring building projects comply with Building Regulations.

During the past year the Department has dealt with 563 building control applications which ranged from full plans submissions, building notice applications and regularisation certificates. Approximately 1100 site inspections have also carried out to ensure work carried out on site complies with the Building Regulations.

Major changes to the Building Regulations are to be introduced in the near future mainly concerning CO2 emissions from all new buildings and these will have a dramatic impact on the building envelope and the type of combustion appliance used to heat the building. There will also be other less major changes to update existing regulations.

The Department dealt with 1002 Property Certificate enquires in 2005/06.

As part of the Facilities Management and Energy Management role the Department monitors energy usage across Council facilities and strives to identify areas to conserve energy and/or make use of renewable energies. An Energy Policy is currently being drafted taking advice from those within the industry and

which will ultimately lead to the production of an energy strategy and action plan for the Council.

(b) Environmental Health Department

The Environmental Health Department is responsible for the provision of a range of services designed to maintain and improve the quality of the environment and to protect public health and safety. During 2005/06 the department carried out 179 food hygiene inspections and 34 food standard inspections. 172 inspections to assess compliance with health and safety legislation in commercial premises were performed. The department continues to ensure commercial premises maintain a safe gas installation through the Gas Wise Initiative and to promote the Health Promoting Schools Award.

Since the employment of the Home Safety Officer the work in the home safety area has far exceeded what was planned. The main objectives of the "Home Safe Home" scheme are to educate and advise on 'good home safety practice' and to be instrumental in the reduction of deaths and injuries as a result of home accidents. 180 home safety checks were performed and 600 pieces of equipment distributed in the Borough.

An Air Quality Management Area was declared due to the likely breach of the nitrogen dioxide objective and came into effect on 1 March 2006. The area incorporates a section of Main Street, Dungiven between the River Roe Bridge and 106 Main Street and 89 Main Street. During the year 189 environmental health, 17 air pollution and 155 noise complaints were investigated (a 74 % increase from last year in noise complaints). 606 planning consultations and 1002 property certificates were also processed.

(c) Technical Services

The Technical Services Department has continued to progress on the programme of works identified for the past year. This included the refurbishment of the swimming pool and surrounding surfacing at the Benone Tourist complex where work was completed in June in preparation for the summer season. Improvements were also carried out to the play area at the Benone Complex together with resurfacing of the tennis courts.

The need for additional play areas was identified at a number of locations across the Borough. In September 2005 a new play facility was opened at Alexander Road Limavady at a cost of £100,000 and a new play area has recently been provided at Curragh Road, Dungiven.

Waste management, including the reduction recovery and recycling of waste continues to constitute a major element of work for Councils Technical Services Department. Stringent targets have been set by the EU and Government to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. Council provides a range of services and facilities to enable the public to deal with their waste including the fortnightly collection of dry recycle through the blue bins and the provision of a range of recycling facilities at Civic Amenity sites at Limavady, Dungiven and Drumaduff. A number of additional "bring facilities" have also been provided at other locations around the borough.

During the past year the Council has managed to regularly achieve overall recycling/recovery rates in excess of 35% of the total waste collected through the wheeled bin service and at Civic Amenity sites leaving it amongst the highest performing councils in Northern Ireland in terms of waste recycling and recovery. This is in no short measure down to the responsible attitude and cooperation of the people of the Borough in making full use of the facilities provided.

Work is progressing towards the delivery of a number of capital schemes including the provision of additional play areas, the Civic Centre and Town Square at Main Street Limavady and the provision of a Civic Amenity site for Dungiven.