

Progress towards the Fairness Charter

Preston City Council adopted its Fairness Charter in January 2015.

We are committed to pursuing the Fairness Charter principles and taking the fairness steps.

What have we done?

Principle: A city which has fairness at the heart of its decision making

Social Forum

In 2013, we established an independently-led [Social Forum](#) to provide an opportunity for organisations committed to bringing about equality within Preston to discuss issues and agree joint actions to address them. The Forum provides a mechanism to share information and skills and to plan jointly, activities directed at promoting the wider well-being of Preston and its citizens. Themed discussions have covered and informed many of the areas of council activity.

Budget setting

We have chosen to protect a number of our services which serve the most vulnerable in our community:

- Support to continue to offer welfare benefits and debt advice services
- Development of a [Local Council Tax Support Scheme](#) which spread the impact of reduced funding to avoid impacting any one particular vulnerable section of the community.
- We have invested £100,000 in the [Guild Money Credit Union](#).

Social Value Policy

We have developed a Social Value Policy which states how we will incorporate the Social Value Act (2012) into our procurement process to help improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Preston.

Move Your Money

We are supporting the Move Your Money campaign which encourages citizens to move their money away from the main banks and to invest in smaller more ethical banks and credit unions. We are also exploring the development of an investment strategy which will ensure that council investments benefit the local economy or offer a sustainable return to the city.

Investment Strategy Fund

This fund is designed to aid the unlocking of wider economic growth in Preston through small capital projects. In 2014/15 the Council allocated £500,000 into the investment fund. The council's aspiration is that this loan fund can be accessed by local community interest companies or charitable trusts alongside their own investment and/or with other match funding.

Community Wealth Building

This initiative aims to focus the purchasing power of 'Anchor Institutions' in Preston at the local level. The total purchasing power of local anchor institutions is considerable and the initiative is working to increase local purchasing, protecting and creating jobs in the local community. Analysis in 2012/13 undertaken by the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES), for the city council has revealed that the local purchasing by all anchors is significantly lower than the national average, and that there is considerable scope to improve the situation, retaining more spend within the local economies, where it will exercise a positive "multiplier effect" through being invested in further local spending cycles.

CLES has now updated the analysis. It reveals there has been an increase of around £74m in spend by six anchors with Preston based suppliers and Preston City Council spending with Preston suppliers has more than doubled from 14% to nearly 30%. You can download the summary report "Updating The Spend Analysis Baseline" from our documents section.

Principle: A city with an economy which supports and promotes fairness in working lives and working practices

Living Wage In 2012

We became the first [Living Wage](#) accredited employer in the North of England. We have designed a Preston accreditation scheme and since then 39 other organisations have signed up to the scheme. We are extending the Living Wage to our procurement process on a case by case basis.

Sustainable Food

In recognition of the importance of food in urban settings and its relation to fairness, poverty, health and environment, we have chosen to invest time and resources to develop and support sustainable food related initiatives collaboratively across relevant council departments to benefit everyone in the city. These activities include:

Promoting sustainable diets and nutrition, reducing ill health and supporting wellbeing

- Support of community food growing projects
- Securing land for creation of more allotments

Social and Economic Equity

- Redevelopment of Preston Markets supporting small scale local food growers and distributors
- Support of Let's Grow Preston, a network of local environmental groups

- Benefits from other Fairness initiatives such as the Living Wage and the Community Wealth Building

Food Policy Governance

- Increasing co-ordination on food related initiatives across departments through an internal Sustainable Food Strategy
- Support of Preston Food Partnership, a multi-agency group raising awareness of sustainable food issues across the city
- Involvement in national, European and international urban food initiatives

Inner East Preston Neighbourhood Plan

The [Inner East Preston Neighbourhood Plan](#) is one of the first Neighbourhood Plans in Lancashire and a good example of community-led action to improve the social and environmental offer, reduce inequalities and improve the health and well-being at a local level. Referendum took place in February 2015. 14% of the electorate voted on the referendum and 94% voted 'yes'. The plan was made in March 2015.

Inner East Preston Big Local Plan

The Friends of Fishwick and St Matthews Community Group based in Inner East Preston, has received £1million from the Big Lottery Fund to develop their area. The funding will be used to consult with the community about their ideas to develop the area both to regenerate the physical environment and to develop the capacity and opportunities within the community. The money will then be invested in the area in the best way to meet these needs and aspirations. Investment will take place over a ten year period.

Digital Inclusion

The Citizenzone has won a number of national awards for its innovative approach to reducing digital inclusion. The vehicle is equipped with the latest interactive technology and has been used to run a number of activities aimed at tackling financial and digital exclusion. Most recently, the Council has entered into a funding partnership with the DWP which enables the resources of the Citizenzone vehicle to be used to support people back into employment. To date, over 1500 people have attended IT awareness sessions (it is acknowledged that being on internet saves people on average £560 per year).

Work clubs

In partnership with DWP, we have established 13 Community [Work Clubs](#) across Preston to provide neighbourhood based employment support services. A work club network, with guest speakers has been established for volunteers and practitioners to share information and best practice.

Supermarket Levy

We are supporting Derby City Council's submission under the Sustainable Communities Act (2007) to introduce a supermarket levy. This is a tax on out of town supermarkets which would be invested in improving high streets.

Co-ops

We have undertaken a considerable amount of work to explore opportunities to set up [co-ops](#) in Preston, This relates closely to the CLES work relating to local spend and community wealth creation. The work draws on and has benefited from support and engagement with the work of the Democratic Collective in Cleveland in the US and the Mondragon network of co-operatives in Spain. A conference to review progress was held on 15 September and follow on work will look at the areas where spending is occurring outside of the city and Lancashire Where there is no local provision or there is an identified gap in the market the initiative is committed to exploring the potential to fill the local market gap through the creation of local co-operatives, thus enabling more spend to stay within Preston.

Principle: A city where everyone has access to affordable energy and decent, affordable homes which suit their needs

Financial Inclusion

The Financial Inclusion Practitioners group met for the first time on Thursday 26 February 2015. The Financial Resilience Asset Mapping provision has been completed and an action plan and on-line forum is now under development.

Representatives from Disability Equality North West, Citizens Advice Bureau, Preston City Council Welfare Benefits and Community Engagement have completed financial capability training. Also, representatives from Sahara, Good Neighbour Network, Preston FM, Disability Equality North West and Preston City Council Welfare Benefits have completed Money Mentor training.

Money Matter Roadshows continue to be aligned to Department of Work and Pensions and Citizenzone IT sessions twice a week in the Ribbleson and St Matthews wards. Between April - December 2014 40 sessions were held with 75 visitors to the vehicle.

Money Matters

We have developed a targeted approach to providing financial information and support in two priority, low income areas. The purpose is to raise awareness of the support services available around welfare reform / benefits, fuel poverty, access to affordable credit, home energy surveys, budgeting and debt and the pitfalls associated with easy access, high interest credit. A training programme was devised to raise awareness for residents and voluntary, community and faith organisations. The Money Matters Campaign / Roadshow continues to be aligned with the Citizenzone IT sessions in priority wards and utilises the relationship with Preston College for the provision of basic budgeting courses.

Read more in the [Money Matters case study](#).

Credit Union

55 Preston City Council staff members have joined the Credit Union. Other employers are being invited to join the Credit Union and the roll out to the wider community is scheduled for March/April 2015.

Affordable Homes

We have a 30% affordable housing requirement on developments of 15 units or more included in our Local Development Framework. We have now modified this to be a 20% requirement on site and 10% via direct contribution. This will help us ensure that affordable housing is of the right build and is located in the right place to meet Preston's affordable housing need.

Empty Homes Scheme

We have developed and adopted, in August of this year, a new Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan. It builds on the success of the previous strategy which resulted in a decrease in the overall number of long term empty properties throughout the city. The Strategy outlines continuation of current activity on empty homes; providing information and advice, the coordination of operations between departments and directorates via the Empty Property Working Group (EPWG) and financial assistance via private sector grants. The Strategy is for private sector homes only but acknowledges that opportunities in the commercial and public sector to reduce overall numbers of empties should be investigated.

Housing Zone

Central government is making available £200 million of recoverable investment funding for Housing Zones in England outside of London. Preston has been shortlisted to receive around £100,000 of this funding (January 2015).

The Housing Zones programme offers the chance to unlock brownfield land that has the potential to provide viable housing schemes. This is through a combination of:

- long term investment funding
- planning simplification (eg local development orders)
- local authority leadership
- dedicated brokerage support from central government and the Advisory Team for Large Applications planning support.

People Power energy purchase scheme

In 2013 the People Power Energy Switch Scheme helped 200 people swap tariffs. The average saving was £250 per annum with the biggest saving being £430 from an annual energy bill. The scheme has been supported by the Citizenzone in high need areas. The campaign ran again in January 2015

APSE

Local Authority Energy Collaboration Scheme We have signed up to this scheme which aims to bring the ownership and managerial control of local energy generation, distribution networks and delivery of energy efficiency works into local control. Local authorities working together in this way would have great influence and would be able to deliver economies of scale in green energy to promote economic growth and combat fuel poverty.

Wind Energy project

We have installed a test mast in the Riversway area to collect data so that we can assess whether permanent wind turbines are a viable proposition. This would allow us to generate our own electricity which could lead to fuel savings for our residents and businesses.

Affordable Warmth

We have an impressive track record in delivering and facilitating a range of projects and measures to improve [energy efficiency](#) and reduce fuel poverty in the private sector. Over £20m of investment has been levered into the city in the last five years to undertake the range of schemes and projects.

Read more about affordable energy in our [affordable energy case studies](#).