



Council Size Submission for Boundary Commission

Local Authority Profile

Fylde Borough Council was formed in 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972, by the merger of the borough of Lytham St Annes, Kirkham Urban District, and Fylde Rural District with 49 elected Members. A review carried out by the LGBCE in 1999/2000 resulted in a council size of 51 Members.

Fylde has a variety of local communities in diverse urban and rural settings, each distinct in character and population spread. The western seafront includes the seaside resort of Lytham St Annes with a large rural hinterland that includes the market town of Kirkham. There is a good rail connection through Kirkham linking urban settlements which sit close to the M55. Weeton has the largest number of armed forces personnel in the county, Warton being home to BAE Systems, with more rural picturesque villages to the North and East and hamlets spread out among attractive green space and farmland.

BAE Systems and Westinghouse Springfield Fuels Ltd are the major large employers, however there is a low equivalence of small to medium enterprises within the borough. Inward employment migration to serve the large sites increases the workday population above the fixed resident population. Fylde has a high jobs-density rate, with an above-average employment rate a result of 43,000 people in work in 3,295 active enterprises, and average earnings are above the national average when measured by place of work. There are two Enterprise Zones: the Lancashire Enterprise Zone with a site in Warton, and the Blackpool Enterprise Zone on the Blackpool and Fylde boundary at Blackpool Airport which ceased commercial passenger flights in 2014 but remains operational for general aviation traffic and business and is located in Fylde.

There are good links to the motorway network with access to the Manchester and Liverpool city regions from the M55, however, movement is hindered being positioned at the end of the M55 with an overburdened road network and most of the Borough coastal and rural in nature. Commuting outside the area is challenging with an underdeveloped rail infrastructure resulting in the fastest method of travel being by car.

Fylde is one of the smallest districts with 79,770 people in 39,330 dwellings, with a similar number of people per km² to the national average. Most residents (63%) live in Lytham St Annes resulting in the largest percentage of council spend in the urban area which also contains the coastal tourist resorts. Investment and service delivery is demand-led with the greatest demand from the urban coast; however, infrastructure investment and housing are spread across the borough.

A higher than average number of elderly residents presents additional challenges in terms of access to social care, health services, loneliness and isolation. Young people get a good education, leave the area for university, then secure employment elsewhere further distorting the demographic balance with most unable to afford to return to the area during their early career. The average age of the population is 45, compared with the national average of 39, over 65s account for 27%, with 32% living alone. Deaths exceed live births, under 16s make-up 16% of the population and 23% of dwellings having dependent children. Fylde residents are 51% female, 49% male and the percentage of the population who identify as Black or Minority Ethnic is 3%.

There is a strong sense of community, volunteer groups and charity organisations play a big part in making the borough a great place to live, work and visit. Fylde has the highest rate in Lancashire of second, or holiday, homes at 45 per 1,000.

Deprivation levels are low, ranked the 120th least deprived from 317 authorities in England and out-of-work benefits are far lower than the national average of 2.3%, at 1.4%. Fylde has the second-lowest crime rate in Lancashire and is one of the safest areas in the region. Residents are technology minded with 85% online and 78% of adults have the five Basic Digital Skills. Not accounting for mobile data, only 1% of households in Fylde do not receive broadband of any kind.

Data source for this section: [Appendix A - Fylde-District-Area-Profile-2019](#).

The report ([Appendix B - A Lancashire Combined Authority](#)) outlines the current position with a Combined Authority and local government re-organisation in Lancashire. The Leader of Lancashire County Council advised

Lancashire authorities on 28 July 2020 that he will be writing to the Secretary of State to request an invitation to submit proposals for the creation of three unitary authorities in Lancashire ([Appendix C - Combined Authority Letter](#)). Preston City and Blackburn with Darwin made similar requests to the Secretary of State to invite local government re-organisation across Lancashire. If an invite is made for re-organisation proposals a timetable could be set that runs parallel to the LGBCE review.

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership. Commentary of these various facets are set out within this submission.

Governance Model

Fylde Council will operate a committee system post Boundary Commission review; it is bound to do this until 2025 as a result of a governance referendum that was held in 2014. For this reason, it is not possible at all to consider a Cabinet model of governance.

Post review, the authority intends to refine its current arrangements, the committee system currently comprises 4 programme committees and the authority has previously determined to opt-out of scrutiny. However, moving forward, the authority intends to opt back into scrutiny for the reasons articulated in other sections of this submission. The committee system will have 1 singular overarching policy committee which deals with a cross-section of issues, thereby allow its membership to build up a broad corporate perspective of the workings of the local authority as opposed to working in silos as has been the case under the current system. It is also intended that a number of members on the policy committee will be nominated lead members with special responsibility positions held. These members will lead on specialisms or corporate themes thereby ensuring that appropriate support is offered to the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee so as not to overburden them and share responsibility more broadly.

At present, the policy committees meet 5 times per year, and this can leave significant gaps within the calendar in terms of meeting dates which can elongate decision making and for this reason a single issue policy committee that was able to meet more frequently (10 times a year) would expedite decision making. If a single policy committee met 10 times a year (maximum) it is 10 fewer meetings than present and provides twice the opportunity to deal with business than a to present.

Three examples of Policy Committee agendas, created from 3 cycles of the current programme committees:

[Appendix D Policy Committee - Cycle 1](#)

[Appendix E Policy Committee - Cycle 2](#)

[Appendix F Policy Committee - Cycle 3](#)

Scrutiny

When the council changed its governance structure to a committee system in 2015 it was given the ability to either opt-in or opt-out of scrutiny, at that time it decided to opt-out of scrutiny. Five years hence and in light of this review, members have had the opportunity to reconsider the position with respect to scrutiny. When scrutiny committees previously existed in the council, two of the scrutiny committees had the ability to consider cross-cutting issues which gave the ability for the members on the scrutiny committees to build up a holistic picture of the work of the council. As the council's current programme committees have been channelled to consider particular aspects of council business, this has meant that the ability to consider the holistic picture has been lost. For example, a member on the Tourism and Leisure committee would have no cognisance of a matter on a Finance and Democracy committee, and vice versa. Therefore, within the revised governance structure, it is the intention of members to opt-in to scrutiny. Also, the ability to work in task and finish groups in more detailed pieces of analysis is seen as a positive way of fostering good cross-party relations and teamwork.

For these reasons, an Internal Affairs Scrutiny Select Committee will be established to fulfil this role. However, members are also cognisant that a local authority must work with a myriad of different partnerships as evidenced by the collective response which has been required to the recent health pandemic. It is felt that emphasis should also be given to these external partnerships and relationships and in light of this, it is also intended to establish an external Community Focus Scrutiny Committee. Examples of the types of work that this outwardly facing scrutiny

committee would undertake are: reviewing partnership response to community safety issues, partnership approach to flooding across the borough, keeping an overview of external organisations for which the council provides external grant funding, and dealing with any services that require an outwardly facing public consultation to shape their future service delivery.

There will be total separation between the members on the Policy Committee and the members on either Scrutiny Committee.

A current and proposed committee chart is [Appendix G - Committee Structure Chart](#)

Examples of items which could be picked up by the new scrutiny committees is [Appendix O Examples of Scrutiny Items](#)

Regulatory Functions

Under the revised framework there will be a number of regulatory committees which will comprise the following:

- Planning Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Public Protection Committee
- Audit & Governance Committee
- Standards Committee

Planning - The planning committee has had as many as 22 members in the past and now has 12 members (and 10 substitutes), which is considered the minimum in order to adequately represent both urban and rural areas of the borough.

The planning committee is one of the busiest committees on the council, in 2019/20 the committee met 16 times and is due to meet 17 times in the 2020/21 cycle. Since the Local Plan has been adopted the number of speculative applications has reduced and so the length of meetings has also reduced from an average of 51 hours to 39 hours and 32 minutes.

Members of the planning committee, and a pool of substitutes, receive training for their role. The quality of debate has improved recently with more unanimous decisions and less polarisation. Again, the adoption of the Local Plan has played a large role in this improvement.

Around 90% (*1420 decisions were issued of which 1272 were delegated 89.6%*) planning applications are delegated to officers and this is considered the right balance. On most occasions, when applications are referred to the committee, the officers' recommendations are followed but the public debate surrounding these recommendations are valued by members who consider it important that decision making is transparent, inclusive, and democratically accountable.

The council's planning committee will have a dual role in that it will act as local planning authority and deal with all planning control functions, and it will also have a role in considering all related development management policies including the formation of Local Plans. The thinking in having a single committee to fulfil both these functions is that the same members who take decisions on local planning control functions need to be cognisant of the formulation of the relevant plans which lead to the formulation of decision making with respect to applications. This means that the Planning Committee will continue in its current guise.

Licensing - The committee only meets as a full committee to approve policy. Panels of 3 members, drawn ad hoc from the full committee would hear licensing applications and reviews. To date in 2020, there have been 7 licensing panels, compared with 4 in 2019, the call on member resource is expected to remain minimal. The opportunity for different members to sit on panels is provided by inviting different members on each occasion, however, availability has led to some members being able to attend more than others.

As with the current structure, there will be two separate committees one dealing with licensing and the other dealing with public protection issues. The membership of the **Public Protection** Committee is currently broadly the same as the Licensing Committee, it has 11 members and politically balance, the committee meets 3 times per year. Going forward both the committees will have 12 common members, dependant on council size and political balance. The thinking in that the members of these two areas of responsibility will be a common membership is that the quasi-regulatory framework of these committees, which is based around hearings and determination of appeals, is common across both areas of work. The result of this is that whilst the areas of work invariably have a different focus there is a common set of skills that members will need to employ to fulfil their role in these areas.

The Audit and Standards Committee currently consists of 9 members, meeting 7 times per year and has proved enough. It has been decided to separate out the work of Audit and Governance from that of Standards and establish two committees to deal with these important issues. There is need for the **Audit Committee** to meet on a more regular basis whereas standards related matters only occur in general as and when issues arise. In recent years, this has meant that items relating to **standards** matters are less frequent and it is therefore felt that a smaller group of five elected members meeting on a less frequent basis would be sufficient to deal with this area of expertise. The council's additional three Independent Persons would advise members of the standards committee and attend these meetings but in a non-voting capacity. The councils Audit Committee will continue to focus its work on keeping an overview of audit activity across the authority and well as keeping the council's regulatory framework, including the council's constitution, under review. It will also have the important role of liaison with the council's external auditors.

The balance of delegation will be broadly the same in terms of authority instilled in the over-arching Policy Committee in terms of decision-making and the existing Scheme of Delegation.

External Partnerships

Members will continue to represent the council on outside bodies, these will be reflected with relationships that exist post review, but a list of current partnerships that the council is represented at is attached as an appendix.

The council is represented on a wide variety of outside bodies, members are appointed to these positions annually by the council and members are requested to submit regular reports, as laid down in the constitution, to the respective programme committees on key issues faced by these respective organisations in order that the council can be aware and respond to ongoing issues as necessary. Going forward it is envisioned that this important area of work will also be overseen by the council's community focus scrutiny committee, giving this area of work a higher focus and more coordinated overview.

[Appendix H Outside Bodies 2020-21 - Approved by Council 19 October 2020](#)

[Appendix I - Part 5f - Protocol for Members on Outside Bodies](#)

Community Leadership

The Council does not have area committees and does not intend to under the revised governance model. Members engage in community leadership through a variety of means and in order to build up a holistic picture of this. A member's survey has been undertaken in which 34 anonymous responses were received with the results summarised below.

53% of respondents had served on the Fylde council for less than 5 years, with 21% serving 6-10 years, 12% serving 11-15 years, 3% serving 16-20 years and 12% serving over 20 years. This compares to the [national census of Councillors in 2018](#) which showed "on average, councillors had served for 9.2 years in their current authority; 47 per cent had served for up to 5 years while 11 per cent had done so for more than 20 years".

Positions of responsibility (Chairman, Vice Chair, Mayor etc) are held by 50% of members who responded, similar to the national average of 54%.

The headline results from the survey indicate that members on average spend between 49 and 84 hours per month on Council business, with the majority of time spent on attendance at committee meetings, engaging with constituents, dealing with casework, and preparing for meetings. This compares to a national average of “22 hours per week (spent) on council business, the largest chunk of which was on council meetings (8 hours)”.

Just over half of members stated that they spend more time on Council business than expected when they became a councillor and over recent years almost three quarters stated that they spend more time on Council business than they used to. It is worth noting that the challenges of the current coronavirus health pandemic have had a significant impact on workload, and due to social distancing measures, it has led to an increase in remote communications rather than face-to-face interaction. Other reasons provided for an increase in hours spent on Council business include easier communication and accessibility between constituents and members via social media; becoming more well-known in the community the longer a member is appointed; the change from a Cabinet to Committee system of governance; increased responsibilities; becoming double or triple-hatted (representing constituents at Parish and County level); greater pressures on councils from central government; and, reacting to more objections, activism, and misinformation via social media. The issues from constituents that have been highlighted as increasing the workload are complexities in planning applications, flooding, speeding, parking, dogs, green, and environment. A number of members also commented on their appointment to outside bodies which will also impact the amount of time spent on council business.

With respect to member development there is a cross party Member Development Steering Group that considers all the training and wellbeing needs of elected members and it is envisaged that this group will continue under the new governance framework with recommendations being made direct to the overarching policy committee. The ultimate purpose of the work of the Steering Group is to champion learning and to ensure that all members are provided with opportunities for training and development which allows them to work effectively as a local community representative and member of the council. Members at Fylde adopt the LGA definition of the role and it is also defined in Part 2 of the constitution 2.03. Members are trained in their role at induction, provided with a mentor, and regular training sessions are made available including digital transformation with incentives, wellbeing support, and leadership skills. The group has achieved the North West Elected Member Development Charter Level 1 and 2.

[Appendix J - Member Development Plan](#)

[Appendix K - Members Survey Results](#)

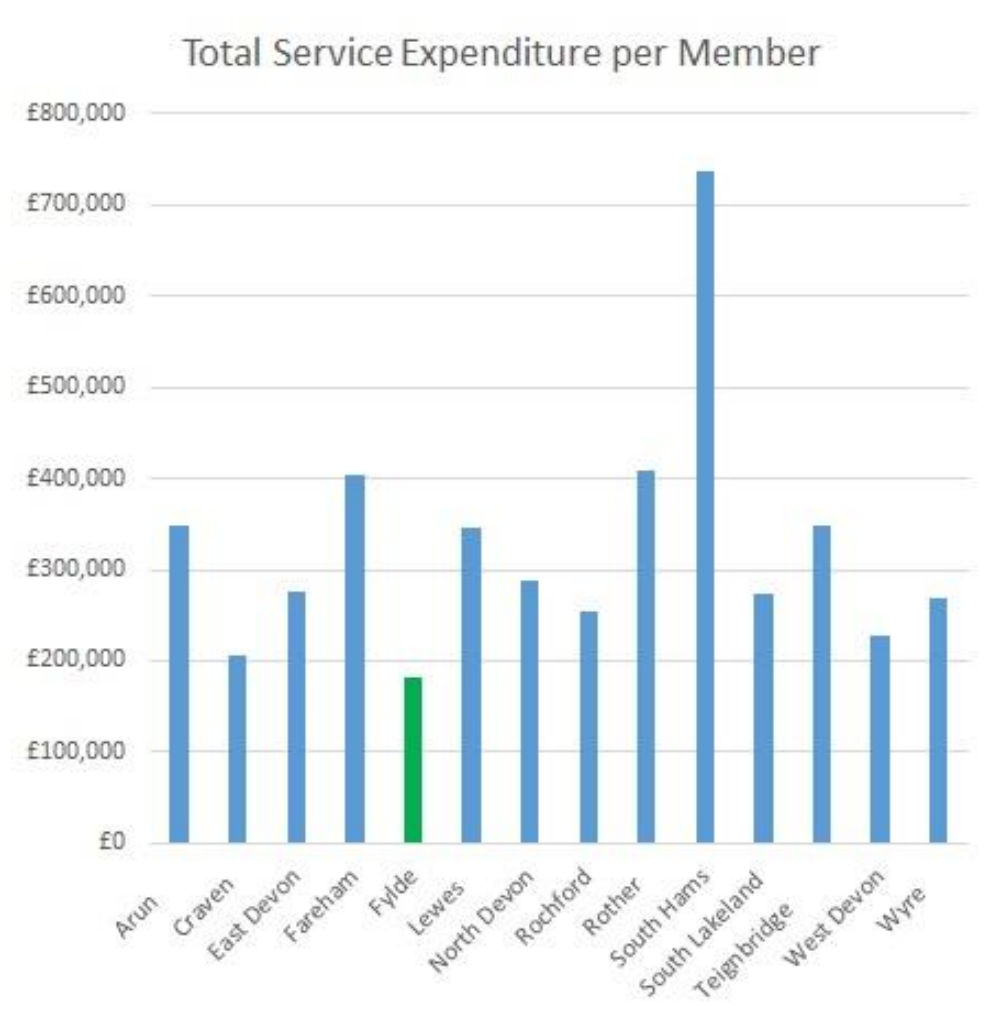
Members deal with their casework in a variety of ways, including by referring for help and advice to a relevant officer or department at the Council; training material provided by the Council; fellow ward Councillors; community organisations; the MP; or, fellow party association members. It is commented that helpful and timely support is received from officers and other members of the Council. Issues are usually followed through directly with the constituent, sometimes collectively with other ward members, and contact may be face-to-face, telephone, email, or meetings; depending on the complexity of the case. Casework does not come in at a regular pace so is often in peaks and troughs, which are dealt with as and when needed.

Members communicate with their constituents in a variety of ways; however, the members survey showed that predominantly this is through telephone and email. Almost a third of respondents spend no time using social media, and over half do not send letters. Eleven members stated that they hold surgeries and twenty-four stated that they send newsletters. The majority of councillors spend between 1% and 40% of their time dealing with constituents face-to-face.

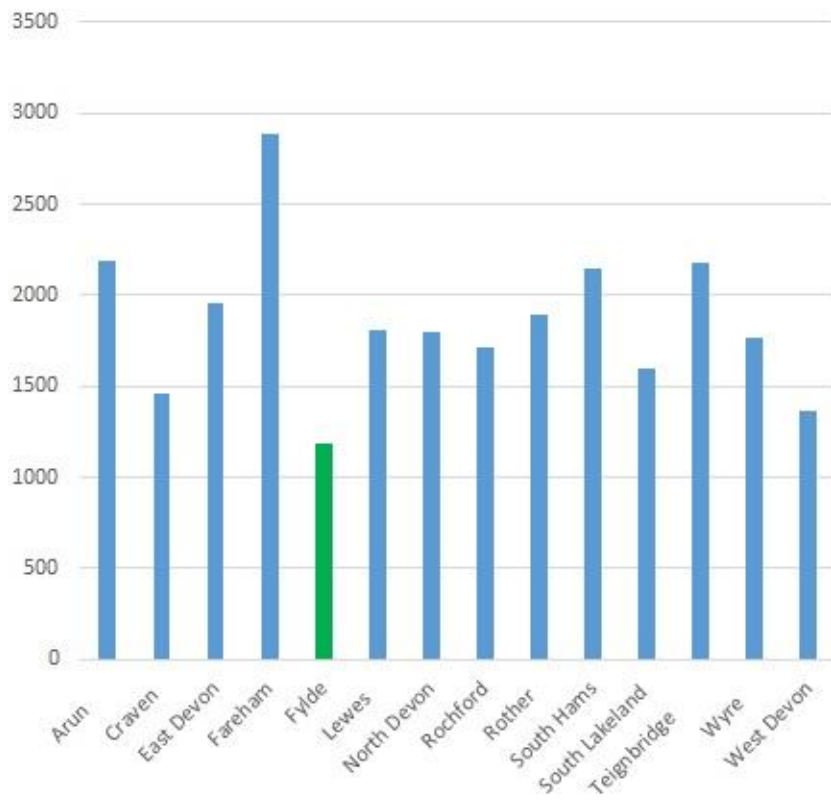
Comparison with Others

It is useful to compare against the CIPFA family group (the authorities most like Fylde) to provide context. When comparing the number of members by almost all metrics Fylde is an 'outlier' in the family group with a disproportionately high number of elected members (see graphs below).

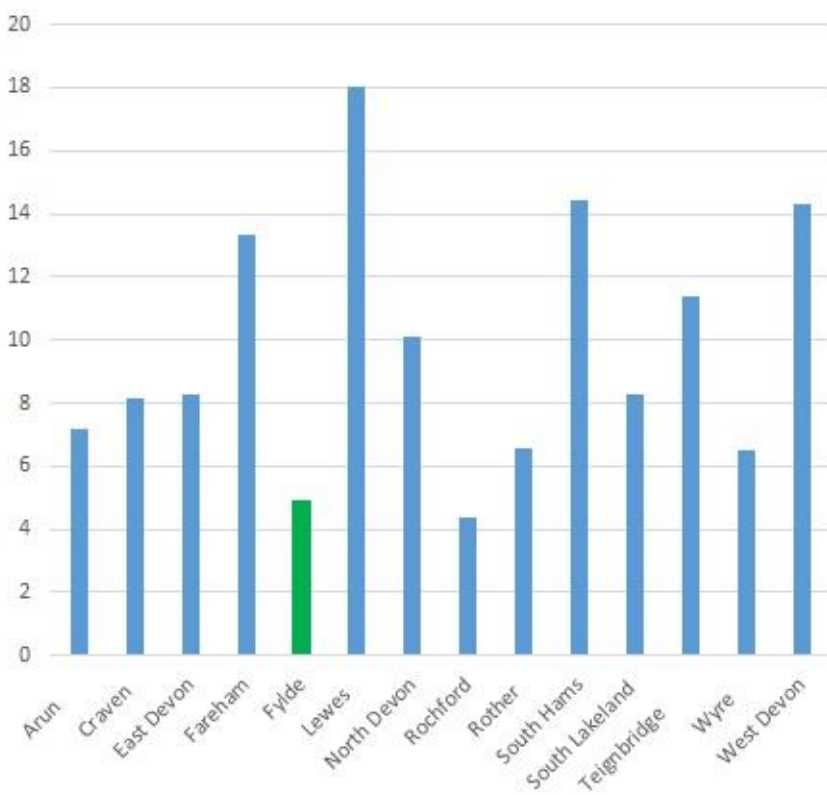
The average number of registered electorate per member in the CIPFA family group ([Appendix L - CIPFA Family Group Data Comparison](#)) is 1,960, Fylde's is currently 1,225 (lowest in the family group), the [two-tier district council average for the country is 1,972 and the average for all local authorities is 2,917](#). If Fylde was to have the average number of electorates per member in 2026 (based on the forecast of 69,001 registered electorate [Appendix M Polling District Forecasting Tool](#)) as the CIPFA family group or the district council average there would be 35 members, if the average for all local authorities was taken there would be 24 members. Whilst this is a simplistic comparison it provides the context that places Fylde as an 'outlier' in the data sets.



Electorate per Member



Number of Officers per Member



Conclusion

In coming to the recommendation for an optimum number of councillors for Fylde, particular consideration has been given to the following:

1. Average number of electorate per councillor in the CIPFA family of councils which demonstrates that Fylde Council is an outlier in terms of representation
2. The adoption of a streamlined governance structure which maximises member involvement in decision-making at a strategic level
3. The present community involvement of members in terms of their engagement with residents and their workload as informed by an all-member survey in comparison with the LGA National Census

In summary, members propose that there are **37 council seats** going forward. Based on discussions around the governance model this would give every councillor the ability to sit on two committees each in theory. This has the advantage of giving a clear signal to those standing for office in the future of the expectation in terms of their input into participating in the council's decision-making framework. It is also anticipated that the Policy Programme Committee, together with the Internal Affairs and Community Focus Scrutiny Committees will each have a membership of twelve on each committee. This will ensure that every member will have a role in the council's governance structure in terms of membership of either the Policy Committee, or a role on one of the two scrutiny committees (bar the Mayor who maintains more of a politically neutral role in their year of office), as well as a role on one of the other committees within the decision-making structure. All members will fulfil a role on full Council also.

[Appendix N - Committees Per Member](#)

The other option available to the council was to continue with its existing governance model. It has been rehearsed why this proposal is preferable within the body of this submission but it is broadly based on the perception that a single programme committee will aid more focused and speedier decision-making against a back-drop of those involved having a better rounded position in terms of strategic leadership and overview. Cross-party working through scrutiny is seen as a means of fostering improved team working between councillors and political groups.



© Fylde Borough Council copyright 2016

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Fylde Borough Council copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document/publication is also available on our website at www.fylde.gov.uk.

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to listening@fylde.gov.uk.