



**RIBBLE VALLEY  
BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CITIZEN CHARTER  
2007**



**MAY 2007**



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## FOREWORD FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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This Charter sets out the standards by which Ribble Valley Borough Council delivers its services to people in the Ribble Valley.

The Council prides itself on the services it provides to the residents, workers and visitors of the Ribble Valley, and our quality of services was scored very highly during our most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (carried out by the Audit Commission).

This Charter lists the applicable Service Standards for each area of service delivery. Please feel free to contact us if you feel that the Council is not providing a particular service to the given standard (contact details are provided at the back of this document).

Thank you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Ranson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Michael Ranson - Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Morris". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

David Morris – Chief Executive

## INTRODUCTION

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This is Ribble Valley Borough Council's third Citizens' Charter.

### ***Our Mission Statement and Vision***

The Council's MISSION STATEMENT which was adopted in 1988, and last revised in 2006, states:

**“The Council will provide high quality, affordable and responsive public services that develop the social and economic well-being of the Borough whilst safeguarding the rural nature of the area”**

Our VISION, which is shared with the Local Strategic Partnership, remains constant. By no later than 2016 we aim to ensure that Ribble Valley will be:

*“An area with an exceptional environment and quality of life for all; sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.”*

We believe that this VISION reflects our shared aim for the Borough, which has the highest quality of environment for those who live here and those who visit the area. It recognises that people must have a high quality of life, that suitable homes are available to meet their diverse needs and that they should be safe and feel safe. People should also be able to access the best services without having to travel long distances to receive them.

This Plan will help us achieve what is expected of a modern, progressive, local authority over the next three years to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Ribble Valley.

### ***Core Values***

In pursuing our priority actions, the Council will continue to deliver the services people want in a fair and consistent manner. Our core values guide and influence our actions as we continuously improve the services we deliver, and so we feel it is important that we explain exactly what our values are. We will:

- Lead the community
- Strive to achieve excellence
- Ensure that access to services is available to all
- Treat everyone equally
- Respect all individuals and their views
- Appreciate and invest in our staff

## ***A Plan For The Future***

The three Ambitions which the Council will achieve for our communities over the next three years are:

- To help make people's lives SAFER AND HEALTHIER
  - especially to ensure that we have safe and trouble-free communities with healthy lifestyles
- To PROTECT AND ENHANCE the existing ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY of our area
  - especially to protect the natural and built environment and ensure that we provide clean streets and open spaces
- To MATCH the SUPPLY OF HOMES in our area with the IDENTIFIED HOUSING NEED
  - especially to ensure that there are sufficient affordable homes for local people who are in need

As we work to meet these ambitions, we also recognise the importance of securing a diverse, sustainable economic base for the Borough, and being a well-managed Council underlies all of our Ambitions.

## ***Our Area***

### ***The Locality***

Ribble Valley is located in the county of Lancashire bordering neighbouring district councils in East Lancashire on three sides and Craven District Council in North Yorkshire to the east. The administrative centre for the district is the historic market town of Clitheroe. In 2001 it was selected for assistance under the Countryside Agency's Market Town Initiative. The industrial and commercial centre for the west of the borough is the town of Longridge. The remaining area is mainly rural, ranging from large villages to small hamlets. Some settlements are accessible along the A59 corridor and others more remote from services and public transport. Along with ancient woodland, biological heritage sites, conservation areas and sites of special scientific interest, two thirds of Ribble Valley is designated as part of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

### ***Population and Demographics***

According to the 2001 census, the population of the district is 53,960 (although it is now estimated at 56,900 – ONS 2005 mid-year projection) of whom approximately 25% live in the town of Clitheroe. Ribble Valley has the largest geographical area within Lancashire, covering 226 square miles (583 square kilometres), but the smallest population. Sparsity of population is, therefore, a key feature – on average 98 people per square kilometre, compared with 354 nationally. There has been an increase of 5.2% in the overall population of the district since 1991, and it is predicted to rise by 10.4% over the next ten years. A relatively small proportion of the population, less than 2%, is from ethnic minority backgrounds. The resident population is relatively old with a greater than average number of residents over the age of 65 (over 17%





compared with a national average of 16%) and consequently a lower than average number of young people aged 24 and under. Population projections suggest that this imbalance will increase in future. The population is living in 24,409 households (September 2006).

### ***Deprivation and the Local Economy***

Ribble Valley is a relatively affluent area and is ranked 283 out of 354 in the indices of deprivation for local authority areas in England (with one being the most disadvantaged). No wards figure in the 25% most deprived, but 5 wards do figure within the worst 10% of all English wards under the Access to Services Index.

Unemployment is well below the national and regional averages and the lowest in the Northwest (at 2% compared with the national average of 4.9%). Earnings are above the national average. However, this masks the structural threat to the area's employment opportunities: the type of jobs available (low skill jobs in declining sectors) and their relatively low pay. Given the rural nature of the area, it is not surprising that agriculture and tourism are important employers. However, recent years have seen major restructuring, within the agricultural/land-based sector in particular. The tourism sector accounts for over 12% of employment and it is estimated that the total spent by tourists in the Ribble Valley each year is in excess of £19.5 million and there are about 3200 jobs in tourism-related businesses. 22% of employment within the borough is in the manufacturing sector - represented by major national and multi-national companies such as Castle Cement, Johnson Matthey, and BAe Systems. The relative small number of large employers is complemented by an above average presence of small companies employing 1-4 employees. A survey undertaken by Local Futures in 2001 showed that Ribble Valley has the second most skilled population in the country after the City of London. However, the survey masks the fact that many of these well-qualified people in high earning senior positions commute daily out of the borough, and live in the area because of the high quality environment and the quality of life it offers. This has had the effect of forcing up the price of houses within the borough, putting them well out of the reach of young people/first time buyers.

The mean house price in the Ribble Valley for the second quarter of 2006 is £208,982. Housing market: lower quartile house prices (based on Land Registry data), for the Ribble Valley gave a price of £134,500 in 2006.

In terms of housing tenure, 81.2% of dwellings are owner occupied, 11.2 % are privately rented and 7.6% are public sector rented. There are currently approximately 351 long-term vacant private dwellings, a figure which we are taking action to reduce. The Council currently owns its own housing stock, comprising 1183 properties (November 2006), although this has been significantly depleted over recent years with high numbers of 'right to buys'. The Council is in the process of transferring its housing stock to a Registered Social Landlord.



### ***Financial Context***

For 2006/07 the Council set a General Fund budget of £6.3m. This included a modest growth of £205,000, the main items being £90,000 extra for the costs of E-Government initiatives including the Council's Contact Centre and continued work with the East Lancashire E-Government Partnership. £40,000 was included for the cost Planning Public inquiries. The Council received £3.5m (Formula Grant) in 2006/07 from the Government to support our revenue expenditure. The net spend per head of population for 2006/07 is £108.67. The Band



D Council Tax for 2006/07 was set at £126.07 (an increase of 3.9% on the previous year, still one of the lowest in Lancashire.)

A five year Capital Programme for years 2006 to 2011 was approved, totalling £10.2m. Expenditure is planned for 2006/07 amounting to £2.6m, which includes £1.36m in respect of housing schemes and £390,000 for refuse collection and recycling.

### ***Political Structure, Management and Human Resources***

Ribble Valley Borough Council is controlled by the Conservative party. The Council employs 270 staff and services are delivered by four departments:

- Chief Executive, which is responsible for corporate services and human resources;
- Development, which is responsible for environmental health, forward planning (including regeneration and countryside) and development and building control services;
- Community Services, which is responsible for street scene services (including engineering, parking services, CCTV, grounds maintenance, waste management and street cleansing services), community development (including crime and disorder, culture, recreation and tourism) and housing services; and
- Resources, which includes legal, ICT, finance, revenues and benefits.



### ***Partnerships***

As a relatively small rural authority, we recognise the importance and value of effective partnership working to help us to achieve our objectives and deliver high quality services. Ribble Valley Borough Council has a long tradition of successful partnership working, both at a strategic level and in the delivery of services. Our key partnerships are with the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership, Lancashire County Council, neighbouring local authorities, the Community & Voluntary Services, Registered Social Landlords, the Police, local Primary Care Trusts and our Parish and Town Councils. These partnerships are crucial in ensuring that the Ribble Valley is an area with an exceptional environment and quality of life.

## WHAT DO WE DO?

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Ribble Valley Borough Council provides services for over 57,000 residents, 2,590 VAT registered businesses and for the thousands of visitors to the area. The main services we provide are:

- emptying the bins
- kerbside collection of recyclable materials
- local recycling centres
- cleaning the streets
- managing CCTV systems in Clitheroe and Whalley
- maintenance of parks, open spaces, Ribblesdale Pool and sports facilities
- support to town and parish councils
- grants to sporting and voluntary groups
- supporting the arts and encouraging tourism in our area
- collecting council tax and business rates
- mobile van information and collection office
- assessing and paying benefit claims
- developing long term plans for the Ribble Valley
- determining planning and building regulation applications
- cemetery services - including a woodland burial area
- public toilets
- enforcing food safety and health and safety standards
- controlling fly tipping, graffiti and dog fouling
- pest control and dealing with stray dogs
- licensing of taxis, food premises, pubs and clubs, street traders and public entertainment
- making sure that everyone can vote if they are entitled to do so
- managing and maintaining Council housing
- improving sub-standard private-owned housing
- providing local land charge searches and maintenance of local land charge register
- enforcing on-street and off-street car parking regulations
- provision of Clitheroe Market (including the Farmers' Market)
- provision of emergency planning guidance and advice to local businesses and residents

## STATISTICS

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We spent £46,600 on disabled housing adaptations and £714,000 on planned improvements such as new boilers and kitchens in council owned homes in 2006/07, with a total of 3,200 repairs being completed



We re-housed 130 households in 2006/07



We collect refuse from 24,400 domestic properties every week

We dealt with 114 complaints relating to dog fouling, 41 complaints about noise pollution, 11 dangerous dogs and 17 stray dogs in 2006/07

Our main cashiers desk deals with over 800 people per week, and our mobile cashiers office sees over 200 people per week

We inspected 408 food premises in 2006 / 07



We provide and maintain 60 dog waste bins within the borough

We answer over 300 telephone calls to our contact centre everyday

There were over 134,000 visits to Ribblesdale Swimming Pool and over 45,000 users of Longridge Sports Centre in 2006 / 07



We licence 50 taxis and over 250 private hire cars



Our Tourist Information Centre dealt with over 112,000 visitors and enquiries in 2006 / 07

We deal with 1,800 Building Regulation applications every year

We processed 2,170 local land charge searches in 2006 / 07



We determined over 900 planning applications in 2006/07

## SERVICE STANDARDS

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### Emptying the bins

We will:

- Collect household waste from domestic properties on a weekly basis
- Provide an assisted collection service to residents subject to their personal circumstances
- Collect free of charge, and within 10 working days of being asked, any bulky items of household waste such as settees, tables, beds etc, but excluding any waste arising from building or property renovation works
- Empty all litter bins at least once a week, with those in busy areas being emptied more frequently
- Empty all dog waste bins at least once a week, with those used heavily being emptied more frequently
- Collect, on request, trade waste from commercial properties on a weekly basis at charges set annually by the Council



### *Kerbside collection of recyclables*



We will:

- Collect mixed, dry recyclables (glass, plastic bottles and cans) from domestic properties on an alternate weekly basis
- Collect garden waste suitable for composting on an alternate weekly basis
- Collect waste paper from domestic properties on a fortnightly basis

### *Local recycling centres*

We will:

- Empty the containers on the local recycling centres as needed



## Cleaning the streets

We will:

- Litter-pick the streets in the town centre of Clitheroe and Longridge on a daily basis
- Mechanically sweep the streets in town centres and high density residential areas on a six weekly cycle
- Mechanically sweep all other streets and main roads on a 13 week cycle
- Remove fly tipped waste and large accumulations of litter within two working days of being notified
- Prosecute people who fly-tip where there is sufficient evidence to do so



## Public conveniences

We will:

- Clean all of our public conveniences on a daily basis

## Parking enforcement

We will:

- Carry out enforcement of pay and display car parks and roads, on a daily basis, where traffic regulations are in place

## Managing CCTV systems in Clitheroe and Whalley



We will:

- Monitor the camera system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year
- Use the information gained to help the Police in the execution of their duties as requested

## *Parks and open spaces*

We will:

- Cut the grass in our parks and open spaces regularly
- Maintain children's play areas so they are safe to use



## **Ribblesdale Pool and sports facilities**



We will:

- Maintain or increase our current 'Quest' score at Ribblesdale Pool (assessed annually)
- Operate a cleaning programme in our centres which ensures good levels of cleanliness at all times
- Provide secure and clean changing facilities for all of our customers
- Maintain or improve current satisfaction levels across all areas of the service
- Achieve our target of increasing participation amongst adults by 1% each year

## **Grants to sporting and voluntary groups**

We will:

- Provide recreational, cultural and sports excellence grants to help both individuals, organisations and communities with the costs of training and competing

## **Supporting the arts**

We will:

- Organise at least three, public, arts workshops each year
- Encourage arts activity and appreciation throughout the borough via our education scheme, providing at least four workshops per year to local schools
- Arrange a minimum of eight exhibitions each year at the Platform Gallery
- Meet the annual targets and conditions placed on us within key partnerships in order to ensure funding for all schemes



## **Encouraging tourism in our area**



We will:

- Operate a local tourist information centre and provide accommodation and theatre booking services for visitors and local residents
- Ensure that our annual inspection grade will be the same or higher than the previous year, guaranteeing



customer satisfaction across all aspects of our service

- Manage visitor flow through marketing and promoting off-peak periods, guidebooks and visitor trails
- Encourage the Ribble Valley Tourism Association and work closely with other organisations developing tourism
- Support local tourism providers by helping them promote their business or products

### **Collecting council tax and business rates**

We will:

- Process applications for Council Tax exemptions and discounts within 25 days
- Process applications for Business Rate exemptions and discounts within seven days
- Process applications for Business Rate relief within seven days
- Apply all changes in circumstances within seven days
- Issue new and amended bills within four days of processing a change

### **Assessing and paying benefit claims**

We will:

- Process new claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit within 30 days
- Process notifications of changes in circumstances within seven days

### **Determining Building Regulation applications**

We will:

- Offer pre-submission advice on means of escape in case of fire and access/facilities for the disabled, identifying problem areas if plans do not comply with regulations
- Review and suggest minor amendments to plans
- Provide a 24 hour answering service, with enquiries to be dealt with on the next working day
- Acknowledge all building regulations applications within four working days of receipt
- Issue a decision on applications within five weeks of acceptance, or eight weeks where agreed
- Respond to all reports of dangerous buildings and structures within 24 hours, and ensure owners make them safe. In appropriate cases, we will authorise work to remove dangerous conditions and take necessary follow up action



- Respond to building notice submissions within four working days of starting work
- Guarantee a same day response to all requests for an inspection received before 10:00am
- Accept telephone calls asking for an inspection of work, except for commencement and completion stages
- Issue a completion certificate within seven days of a satisfactory completion, on request

## **Determining planning applications**

We will:

- Advertise appropriate planning applications in the local newspapers within two weeks of registration
- Inform applicants and objectors about the progress of planning applications when requested, and aim to make details available on our website
- Provide a duty planning officer to give general planning advice without the need for an appointment
- Acknowledge all comments on planning applications within 48 hours of receipt
- Ensure parish councils receive copies of all planning applications within their parish
- Publicise planning applications using national guidelines as a minimum standard
- Send out decision notices within three working days after the relevant Planning and Development Committee
- Reply to and investigate enforcement complaints within three working days and continue to keep the complainant informed
- Deal with requests for copy decision notices within one week of receipt of payment



## **Development planning, regeneration, and countryside management**

We will:

- Provide a range of opportunities to involve residents and interest groups in the formulation of planning policy
- Respond to requests for advice on planning policy within five working days
- Respond to all land use enquiries within five working days of their receipt and deal with enquiries about development plans, population and housing statistics in 10 working days



- Respond to all non-emergency countryside and tree management enquiries within five working days
- Send an initial response to 'high hedge' complaints within three working days
- Respond to all regeneration and economic development enquiries within five working days

### **Cemetery services - including the woodland burial area**



We will:

- Provide a sympathetic and confidential service for the bereaved, offering the option of woodland burial
  - Carry out burials according to statutory requirements
  - Take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and welfare of visitors to the cemetery
- Adopt environmentally-sensitive practices where possible
  - Offer the chance to buy a limited number of commemorative trees in the cemetery arboretum
  - Offer guidance on memorials allowed at the cemetery and give sympathetic consideration to individual requests
  - Maintain the grounds to a high standard
  - Oversee the upkeep of 'closed' churchyards which are our responsibility

### **Enforcing food safety and health and safety standards**

We will:

- Periodically monitor the 700 food premises in the borough according to the degree of risk
- Respond to public complaints about poor food hygiene practices or unfit food within two working days
- Investigate outbreaks of food borne disease immediately to identify the source and prevent further spread
- Periodically assess and monitor work places within the borough according to the degree of risk for health and safety in the workplace
- Respond immediately to major accidents in the workplace
- Respond to complaints relating to health and safety in the workplace within two working days



## Environmental & health protection

We will:

- Respond to complaints which have an environmental health significance within two working days
- Regulate premises and processes registered with, permitted, or licensed by the Council, consistent with the degree of risk
- Periodically assess other regulatory bodies and local businesses in an effort to minimise emissions and impact on the environment and the local community
- Periodically assess and monitor local air quality, where necessary, in line with government guidance
- Periodically assess and regulate premises and employees in relation to smoke-free workplace legislation

## Controlling fly tipping, graffiti and dog fouling



We will:

- Remove fly tips within five working days of notification
- Remove graffiti from our buildings within five working days of notification
- Take action to prosecute all fly tipping offenders

## Pest Control and dealing with stray dogs

We will:

- Respond to Pest Control complaints (infestations of rats, mice and other pests of public health significance) within two working days
- Respond to requests for Dog Warden services within two working days
- Remove and detain captured stray dogs for a maximum of seven days (to be returned on payment of a fee)
- Seek to minimise dog fouling throughout the borough by providing a daily enforcement patrol
- Promote responsible dog ownership through the production and delivery of educational literature on a quarterly basis



## **Licensing taxis, food premises, street traders and also persons and premises under the Licensing Act 2003**

We will:

- Approve and regulate food manufacturers and street traders in line with adopted standards and national guidance
- Review the number of hackney carriage licenses issued on a bi-annual basis
- Enforce the conditions under which taxi drivers, vehicles and operators are licensed on a daily basis
- Process applications under the Licensing Act 2003 in accordance with the timescales laid down by the Act

## **Making sure that everyone can vote if they are entitled to do so**



We will:

- Carry out an annual canvass for the register of electors
- Encourage people to apply under the rolling registration provisions when they move into the area
- Advertise the availability of postal and proxy votes at election time

## **Managing and maintaining Council housing and improving sub-standard private-owned housing**

We will:

- Aim to re-let properties that become vacant within three weeks
- Carry out repairs within the following time periods:
  - emergencies – 24 hours
  - urgent repairs – within five working days
  - non-urgent repairs – up to 28 working days
- Provide a 24 hour service to elderly tenants seven days a week, via wardens and central control, to monitor the well-being of elderly residents and respond to emergency calls
- Confirm details of registration of housing applications within one week
- Investigate all claims of homelessness promptly and provide an advice and assistance service to prevent homelessness
- Adapt the homes of disabled tenants to improve their quality of life





- Provide offers of sale to applicants who want to buy their council home within the following timescales:
- 12 weeks for houses
- 20 weeks for flats

## Local land charge searches and maintenance of local land charge register

We will:

- Aim to process standard searches within 10 working days
- Receive searches electronically in addition to postal applications



## Personnel Services

We will:

- Send out job application forms within two working days of a request
- Respond to all applications, whether successful or not, within seven working days of the appointment being made

## Payment of creditors

We will:

- Pay all of our undisputed invoices for commercial goods and services within 30 days of receiving the invoice or within the agreed payment terms

## Committee Services

We will:

- Ensure that agendas for all committee meetings will be available on our website at least five working days before the meeting
- Publicise minutes of all committee meetings on our website within five working days of the meeting being held



## Dealing with public enquiries

We will:

- Process Freedom of Information Act requests for information within 20 working days
- Answer all telephone calls to our Contact Centre within 20 seconds; all other telephone calls will be answered within 10 seconds



- Reply to, or acknowledge, all letters within five working days
- Ensure that all personal callers will not have to wait more than five minutes to be seen



## Clitheroe Market



We will:

- Provide a vibrant and balanced general retail market three days per week, and a flea/collector's market one day per week
- Incorporate and encourage a monthly 'farmers' market' to promote local produce
- Ensure that our market is maintained to a high standard and cleaned at least once a day

## Emergency planning

We will:

- Co-ordinate and share information with appropriate local and government organisations to ensure an effective and integrated response
- Assess local risks and use this to inform emergency planning
- Put in place appropriate emergency plans
- Co-ordinate the authority's Business Continuity Management arrangements as necessary
- Make information available to the public about civil protection matters as necessary
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management

## COMPLAINTS

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The complaints procedure is aimed at making it easier to complain, and also to help provide better services. It is not intended to cover requests for services or information, or to deal with matters that have their own legal remedy, for example, housing benefit appeals. If you are unhappy with the service you receive, please contact the appropriate department, or the Chief Executive, using the contact details given below.

We will:


- Respond to all complaints made in person, by telephone, by letter, by email or via your councillor
- Provide a full written response within 10 working days
- If you remain unhappy following our response to your original complaint, we may refer you to a Complaints Appeal Panel to review your case. Alternatively, the authority reserves the right to direct the complainant to the Local Government Ombudsman


## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED A SERVICE FROM US WHICH DOES NOT REACH OUR STANDARDS

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- **Write to:**

The Chief Executive  
Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Council Offices  
Church Walk  
Clitheroe  
Lancashire  
BB7 2RA

 01200 425111

 01200 414488

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

 [ce@ribblevalley.gov.uk](mailto:ce@ribblevalley.gov.uk)

- **Office opening hours:** Monday – Friday 8:45am – 5:00pm

- **Reception facilities are found on:**

Level B      **General Enquiries**

Cashiers, Council Tax and Housing Benefit enquiries.

Level C      **Community Services and Legal Services**

Housing, Waste and Refuse Collection, Licensing, Land Charges,

Elections and Electoral Registration, Community Safety, Sports, Leisure and

Recreation, Arts, Heritage and Tourism, Street Scene and Corporate Services

Level D      **Development Services**

Development Control, Building Control, Forward Planning and Regeneration,      Environmental Health

- **Out of hours services:**

The Council operates an out-of-hours service to deal with emergencies. The number to ring is: 01200 444448

- **The Council's other facilities are:**



- The Tourist Information Centre - Market Place, Clitheroe  
☎ 01200 425566



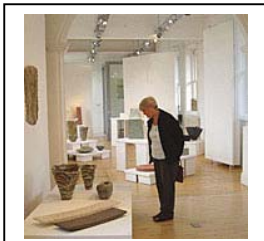
- Ribblesdale Pool - Edisford Road, Clitheroe  
☎ 01200 424825



- The Museum - The Castle, Clitheroe  
☎ 01200 424635



- Longridge Sports Centre - Preston Road, Longridge  
☎ 01772 784474



- Platform Gallery - Station Road, Clitheroe  
☎ 01200 443071





**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME  
TO READ OUR CHARTER**

# Let us know what you think

There may well be issues that concern you that we have not covered in detail in our Charter. These may be addressed in one of our related policy or strategy documents. These are available on our website, or via our Corporate Services Unit.


The Council is very interested to hear your views/comments on any of its services. Please contact the Corporate Services Unit on 01200 414421, and we will ensure that your queries are answered.



Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Council Offices  
Church Walk  
Clitheroe  
Lancashire  
BB7 2RA

 01200 425111

 01200 414488

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

 [ce@ribblevalley.gov.uk](mailto:ce@ribblevalley.gov.uk)