

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

1. HMR UPDATE

The Housing Regeneration Programme is progressing well with spend and outputs on target. Residents living within the HMR areas will continue to see an ongoing programme of refurbishments, acquisitions and clearance projects as well as some community and environmental initiatives during the year.

1.1 2009-10 Programme

Bank Top & Griffin – Refurbishment of two blocks on Griffin Street and Wellington Road are progressing well and are scheduled for completion in March. We are currently preparing to start on two more blocks on these streets and these will be finished in summer. Schemes on Palatine Road and Ribblesdale Place in Bank Top are nearing completion, and Rawsthorne Street and Wensley Road are progressing well.

Inner South East (this is the title that this area was given when the HMR Area Development Framework areas were originally set up) – Refurbishment schemes are progressing well on Vale St, Infirmary Street and Infirmary Road. Two blocks of properties being refurbished on Audley Range are almost complete and further blocks are being prepared for refurbishment. The Accrington Road gateway project is progressing well with two further blocks (on either side of the Shadsworth Road junction, now included in this years programme.

Darwen – Work to properties on Bank Street is now complete and Harwood Street is nearly complete. Refurbishment schemes at Nancy St, Green St East and Hindle Street are progressing well.

Acquisitions and Demolition – The acquisition programme continues in the declared clearance areas at Infirmary Waterside in Blackburn and Queen Street Regeneration area in Darwen. A number of demolitions have been carried out at Queens St in Darwen and Highfield Road in Infirmary and we plan to carry out further demolitions once remaining properties are purchased.

The Griffin Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment has been completed and the outcome has been reported to Executive Board. We will be going back to residents in January to consult on the Council's proposals to declare Griffin a Renewal Area.

The Community Confidence Project - Residents within parts of the Infirmary and Griffin areas of Blackburn and parts of the Queen Street area of Darwen are being offered a free survey and free security upgrade. Surveys and installations continue to be carried out in these areas and the scheme offers new door locks, window locks and security lighting, amongst other security items. The Community Confidence Project is being delivered by Groundwork Pennine Lancashire. We have completed 50 security upgrades on properties to the end of September.

The Highfield Park Pavilion Refurbishment – The pavilion refurbishment is progressing well and is due to complete in the next few weeks. The park refurbishment is planned to start in February with completion May 2010.

1.2 Purchase Assistance Loans

The Council continues to offer Purchase Assistance Loans to residents who are displaced through clearance in the Borough, through the administrators Guinness Northern Counties Housing Association.

2. PENNINE LANCASHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY

The first Housing Strategy for Pennine Lancashire has now been approved and published. The Strategy includes but is much broader than Housing Market Renewal, including for example joint strategic responses to affordable housing provision, improved standards in the private rented sector, housing options and advice services and housing for the growing population of older people.

A Delivery Plan has been produced which will promote more collaboration and joint working in the coming months and years.

3. HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Young Peoples Housing Team for 16-25 year olds is now successfully running from offices at the far end of Jubilee House. The Team, which consists of officers from Housing, Children's Services and Connexions works closely with Nightsafe to deliver better outcomes for homeless young people.

Since the Team was launched earlier this year 125 young people have been assessed. Better and more suitable housing is being accessed including supported housing and the new temporary accommodation jointly developed with Twin Valley Homes at James Street and Hollin Street. There is an agreement with the housing associations that they will accept referrals for vacancies solely from the team.

A 'Passport to Housing' has been developed jointly with Nightsafe which provides vulnerable young people with life skills and basic training so they are better equipped to access and sustain supported housing. Work has also started with CXL to help young homeless people Not in Employment Education or Training to access suitable training etc. A protocol for providing appropriate support, care and accommodation for vulnerable homeless 16 and 17 year olds has been developed with Children's Services Referrals and Assessments and use is made of the Common Assessment Framework. To date 6 young people have been referred to family mediation and more work is proposed to deliver this service at an earlier age prior to crisis.

The Teenage Parents Housing Support Team is also now up and running. It is providing access to accommodation and housing related support to teenage parents and 47 young people and their children have accessed the service so far. The Team provides access to supported accommodation, and social and private rented housing. The service is supported by Grant from the Department of Children Schools and Families.

The Teams work very closely together to benefit from joint service development and both Teams are the product of close collaboration by Housing and Children's Services.