

## 1. ALLEY GATES

The alley gating scheme has been rolled out during the course of 2009 and continues apace. After the successful installation of three pilot schemes around the Borough the programme is now fully operational. There are now twelve schemes that have been fully implemented across the Neighbourhood Boards and Wards of Blackburn and Darwen. The largest scheme with twelve individual gates and protecting the rear alleys of approximately a hundred business and residential properties is in the New Wellington Street area of Mill Hill. Whilst smaller schemes, such as Brookfield Street in Shear Brow or Queen Street in Huddlesden, have only two gates and protect alleys that previously were hotspots blighted by crime and anti-social behaviour. Other schemes are due to go to community and statutory consultation, whilst others are in the feasibility and evidence gathering stage. Requests from the Neighbourhood Teams, Ward Councillors, the Police and the public are being received on a regular basis where issues of crime, anti-social behaviour and other nuisance factors, such as environmental issues are impacting upon people's quality of life.

### 1.1 Outcomes of the pilot schemes

It is now becoming possible to draw preliminary findings following the installation of the pilot schemes, with encouraging results. In one area analysis of the police data from April to December 2009 shows reported incidents to have more than halved compared to the corresponding 6 months of 2008. This is further reflected by a halving in the proportion of incidents occurring to properties on one side of the street, with the gated alley behind, compared to the ungated other side of the street.

Feedback received from residents has been hugely supportive of the schemes. People have written and petitioned urging for the installation of gates, describing them as "a great idea". Whilst others have written with appreciation following installation saying, "...all have the same views and are amazed at the change. It is fantastic not to live in fear... Every one of us is really grateful to everyone who made the gating possible".

## 2. ASB VICTIM'S CHAMPION

The newly created post of ASB Victim and Witness's Champion is part of a step up in the work to tackle ASB and improve services to support victims and witnesses. The role, based within the Community Safety Partnership, is to add value to existing services by ensuring co-ordination without duplication throughout the Borough. The Victim's Champion acts as a referral point for ASB teams, within and without the Borough Council, for cases that need extra help. The post is Central Government funded, through the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Group, for the sixty-two NCJ Pioneer Areas where the perception that anti-social behaviour is a problem in greater than 25% of the population (as identified in the Place Survey 2008). Such perceptions are heavily-correlated with the numbers of young people in an area, and Blackburn with Darwen actually has a lower rate of concern about ASB than would be expected given the proportion of young people in the population. Nevertheless, the new funding is to the tune of £5,000 for 2009/10 and £20,000 for 2010/11 for the creation of the role; with further funding in 2009/10 of £10,000 for delivering services supporting young victims of crime and £40,000 for measures tackling ASB and supporting and protecting victims and witnesses of ASB.



### **3. CASH FOR COMMUNITIES**

A cheque presentation ceremony took place on Saturday 12 December for the recent round of Cash for Communities funding. Approximately 80 groups attended to collect their cheques which were presented to successful groups by the Mayor of Blackburn with Darwen Councillor James Hirst. A wide range of groups and projects, ranging from allotments and healthy eating to clog dancing and exercise initiatives, took part in the recent funding round. The maximum amount applied for by groups was £1,000. This enabled a total of 99 groups to benefit within this round - an increase of 21 groups compared to Cash for Communities events taking place in March of this year, which was 78.

### **4. CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE**

#### **4.1 Customer service delivery**

Customer Services in conjunction with Neighbourhoods & Learning are undertaking a pilot project, funded by CLG, to review a toolkit which has been developed to improve customer service delivery. They have been asked to trial this for developing customer focussed partnerships with particular emphasis on tackling issues linked to redundancy. They are working with key partners to identify the key priorities, understand the customer needs and ascertain the work involved in delivering changes that are identified. The project will conclude in March 2010 when our findings on the use of the toolkit are provided to CLG. We are one of 9 regions involved in the pilot project.

#### **4.2 Contact Centre**

##### 4.2.1 Community Transport

The Community Transport service went live at the beginning of November. Initially, we saw high demand for the service, however most calls were from worried customers seeking reassurance about the changes to the service. Calls have now levelled out and we have recently started to use a new booking application with a view to optimising bus routes and making the service more efficient and economical.

##### 4.2.2 Adverse weather

Throughout the adverse weather, we continued to provide an information service to the public. Refuse & Recycling collections and the Community Transport services were suspended. Daily meetings were held to review both services and recorded messages to keep customers informed.

All Community Transport customers were contacted to let them know that their trips would not be taking place. During the calls, we enquired about customers' welfare and where customers were in dire need of provisions, we were able to offer a 'shopping' service where Community Wheels drivers went to the shops and got basic provisions such as milk and bread.

The majority of calls we received week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> January were regarding waste collections - the previous week, we experienced high demand for street gritting and salt bin refills, however the continued press coverage appears to have made customers aware of shortages and as a result, these types of requests were minimal last week.

We were at full staffing capacity on all days with the exception of Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> when 4 people could not get in to work as a result of the snow. Staff with cars helped people out who normally came in on public transport.

#### **4.3 Advice Service**

In quarter 3, Oct-Dec 2009/10, the Advice Service secured £623,638 in extra annual benefit income for citizens.

An increase in demand for representation at benefit appeal tribunals has occurred. In quarter 3, 35 citizens were represented at appeal tribunals, of which 91% were successful.

The Advice Service is working with the Housing Needs section to help citizens with the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and the Repossession Prevention Fund Scheme.

The Darwen Advice Partnership has been strengthened with the increase of the CAB opening days to 4 a week. Twin Valley Homes have now established their front line service for Darwen Tenants on Darwen Reception and this has been well received by their tenants.

