

Care Trust Plus

'The 1st of April saw the inaugural meeting of the Care Trust Plus Board take place. The meeting was successful in terms of process and outcomes and it gave a great base to build upon. Issues we discussed at the meeting were; the aims and objectives of the new organisation, strategic developments within Care Trust Plus, Corporate Governance Framework, including Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions and also the adoption of policies. Dominic Harrison, Director of Public Health gave an informative presentation on Health & Wellbeing in Blackburn with Darwen. The first meeting was well attended and positive feedback has been received'.

Youth MP Election

I recently attended the Youth elections and where I acted as returning officer. Blackburn College student Shabaz Khan was successfully selected as the new Youth MP. There was a really good level of interest in the youth elections and more young people than ever voted in the elections which took place in schools, colleges and the Council's partner organisations. I have invited Shabaz and deputies to attend Executive Board meetings to observe the Council's decision making discussions and to tell us what issues are important for the young people of the borough and they attended their first meeting on 15 April.

Future Jobs Employees

In March I met with around 20 young people who are now employed by the Council thanks to the Future Jobs Fund. This initiative has thrived within Blackburn with Darwen and over the next few months 80 more people will take up positions across the Council through this scheme. PLACE has now received an offer letter from the government, securing funding for Future Jobs up to March 2011.

Pennine Lancashire

NWIEP – North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership

The NWIEP is a partnership dedicated to helping local authorities and their partners achieve efficiency and improvement. I am chair of NWIEP through the 4NW board. At a recent NWIEP meeting there was discussion on the budget cuts within the public sector, highlighting further the need to identify more efficient and effective ways of working across council services. The strong partnership approach across Pennine Lancashire provides a good base on which to build further partnership working on a variety of council services, both back office support and front line services. This approach is encouraged by NWIEP. The diverse nature of Pennine Lancashire means that each authority has different strengths and experiences to contribute in evaluating improvements to service delivery through a joint approach. Work of this nature is currently being done across Pennine Lancashire on services including building control, energy management and domestic violence. Other services where this kind of joint approach may be useful are also being explored.

Local investment plan

I am pleased to announce that the Joint Committee recently received confirmation of an £84million investment package to support improvements to housing across Pennine Lancashire and to boost the area's economy. This is a significant increase in resources

previously received in this area and is further evidence of the success of the Pennine Lancs approach. As Chair of the Joint Committee, I was nominated to give final sign off on a £64million Local Investment Plan with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and separately, the Joint Investment Plan with the NWDA, who have agreed to invest £20million. The investment will support new, high value jobs and growth within the advanced manufacturing sector; better skills provision; better transport links across the area and the development of new affordable and better quality housing. PLACE leaders have committed themselves to working with the NWDA using the investment to create a 'Total Business Environment' to help support and insulate local businesses from the challenges posed by the current financial climate. This is supported by a pledge from the NWDA to provide business support in Pennine Lancashire including grants and loans as well as investment in skills and training for staff and low carbon programmes. The HCA and PLACE have also agreed to continue to work together to develop new approaches to help deliver much-needed new housing and improvements to existing homes in the face of the economic downturn. The funding will form part of our investment framework which will allow us to plan our priorities and developments where they will have a greater impact both on the economy and well-being of local people.

RS2010

RS2010 is the integrated regional strategy which replaces the existing Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy. A formal statutory 12-week consultation of the High Level Strategic Framework and the draft Implementation Framework will take place in the Summer. RS2010 is an important document as it sets out where investments and growth opportunities will occur. It is intended to have a Member workshop during the 12 week consultation period to help inform the response. Blackburn with Darwen is well placed, within the context of the Pennine Lancashire MAA, to continue to attract investment and be recognised as a place which can contribute to regional economic growth.

JIP – Joint Investment Plan

As mentioned above, the JIP was recently given final sign off. The development of a Pennine Lancashire JIP was a key action of the MAA and it is being developed with key regional funding partners. The JIP incorporates the major funding streams that will deliver the key aspects of the Pennine Lancashire MAA; including £200m North West Development Agency (NWDA) over the next ten years, European funding, Local Transport Plan (LTP), Department of Work and Pensions funding, LSC funding transfer, Housing Market Renewal (HMR), Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), Local Authority funding and private sector investment. This provides a total investment of over a £1 Billion over a 10 year period. Pennine Lancashire will be the first partnership in the Northwest to sign off a JIP. It represents a new way of working with regional funding bodies, and places us in a stronger position to draw down resources.

Addressing Social Inclusion

The Joint Committee have recently discussed social inclusion within Pennine Lancashire as the Equality Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in spring 2010, with certain elements, particularly the socio-economic duty on public bodies and the public sector Equality Duty likely to come into force in 2011. The Bill strengthens laws around equality by introducing a new public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities and using public procurement to improve equality. The new duty aims to create a fairer

society where everyone can progress regardless of their social class and will require public bodies to consider how they will reduce the barriers that hold people back, block aspirations and prevent people fulfilling their potential. The Pennine Lancashire Third Sector Board will work closely with the Pennine Lancashire local economic assessment group to ensure the implications of the new bill are considered.

Lancashire Leaders group

I recently attend the Lancashire Leaders group where discussion took place on the following items:

- The future of the Regional Development Agency
- Lancashire Economic Partnership – transitional arrangements
- NWIEP