

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND CULTURE

### 1. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

This is progressing on all fronts. The transfers under licence of Ivy Street, Sudellside, Little Harwood and Shadsworth took place several months ago and have been broadly successful. There are of course teething troubles but generally the voluntary groups have risen very well to the challenge. Staff were withdrawn from the Barlow Institute on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 and the building is now being run by the Committee and local volunteers. A procurement exercise in respect of the four remaining centres, Accrington Road, Bangor Street, Greenfields and Mill Hill began in November and is ongoing. It is expected that a sustainable solution will be found for all four centres by the end of the financial year.

### 2. PANTOMIMES AT KING GEORGE'S HALL (KGH) & DARWEN LIBRARY THEATRE (DLT)

The 2011 pantomimes both did well considering the economic climate. KGH staged "Dick Whittington" and DLT "Cinderella". Both pantomimes were up compared to 2010, both in attendances and income although 2010 was a difficult year due to the snow. KGH was only slightly up on tickets but DLT saw a 5% growth.

#### 2.1 BARS & CATERING CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR BUSINESS

December 2011 saw a considerable increase of 88% in the number of lunchtime Christmas meals sold in Blakeys and the number of Party Nights Out. A New Years Eve private event was also very successful.

Blakeys has had some minor improvements made in early January 2012 to offer a venue that is very flexible and a programme of events that attracts smaller acts and bands.

#### 2.2 BLACKBURN AND DARWEN COMEDY FESTIVAL

The 5th Annual Comedy Festival showcased a total of 13 concerts attracting an audience in excess of 7,500 and was once again hailed as a tremendous success. Headliners included Sarah Millican, Micky Flanagan, Ken Dodd, the Lancashire Hotpots and the Grumbleweeds. The 2012 festival is currently being programmed and Jimmy Carr was the first show to go on sale recently for his October 13th show.

#### 2.3 ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the Oct-Dec 2011 season included at Blackburn were the Halle Orchestra, Mr Men, Bullseye and the Vienna Festival Ballet who performed 'the Nutcracker'. Also at Darwen the Hindoo Man, Chantel McGregor, Spiers & Boden, the Houghton Weavers and SoulTrain. There were also sell-out concerts featuring Marc Almond, Joe Brown and Fish.

### 3. MUSEUM SERVICE

The temporary exhibition by Blackburn Artists ended on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and will be replaced by an exhibition of British watercolour paintings from the gallery's prestigious collection. These water colours are not often seen because of their sensitivity to damage by light. The popular Egyptians exhibition will host an event on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012 where visitors will be asked to become an Edwardian archaeologist for the day in a mocked up tent of the famous Blackburn archaeologist, Professor Garstang. A short lunchtime talk was held on the early printed books in the Hart Collection on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and an afternoon Friends of Blackburn Museum talk on Georgian poets will be held at 2pm on 9 February 2012.

The public toilets and reception area have been refurbished and make an important improvement to the visitor experience.

## **4. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE**

### **4.1 SERVICE LAUNCH AT THE BARLOW INSTITUTE**

Following the withdrawal of the Mobile Library service which served rural areas, a volunteer managed deposit collection service has been developed and will operate from The Barlow Institute from 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

### **4.2 FRIENDS OF DARWEN LIBRARY**

This group continues to meet monthly to develop initiatives to support library services in the Darwen area. Recent achievements include:

- Funding which has enabled the purchase and presentation of books for the library.
- Launch of the Virtual Library Café, an initiative working in partnership with Darwen Aldridge Community Academy (DACA) to provide public access to IT facilities on Tuesdays when Darwen Library is now closed.

## **5. LEISURE, HEALTH and WELLBEING**

### **5.1 BSF COMMUNITY USE**

Pleckgate High School handed over the operational management, of the new facilities for community use to the Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012. This initial pilot will enable a new way of partnership working to be established and will encourage community involvement in decision making.

Whilst the achievement of successfully developing community use of BSF Schools will require involvement from across the whole council, as Executive Member for Leisure and Culture I will be leading on this emerging service area.

## **6. YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE CHRISTMAS 2011 HOLIDAY PROGRAMME**

### **6.1 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

A five day extensive holiday scheme ran during the Christmas holidays in newly developed sensory and ICT rooms at Kaleidoscope Youth Centre, designed for use by children with disabilities aged 8-19 years. There were 150 attendances over the five day period with a wide range of activities offered.

### **6.2 CHILDREN IN OUR CARE**

Six young people from the Children's Homes participated in the holiday programme plus additional 1:1 engagement continued throughout the period.

### **6.3 OTHER SPECIAL HOLIDAY PROVISION**

At Audley Leisure Centre, 380 young people from the Borough took part in five-a-side Football on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2011 with 149 in a six-a side Cricket competition during the period.

### **6.4 GENERIC YOUTH PROVISION**

This continued at Accrington Road and Little Harwood throughout the holiday period, including the public holidays. All other provision was open as usual.