

## LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

### IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES

We are in the process of analysing the impact of the Government's changes to welfare such as Universal Credit, Housing Benefit as well as other policy changes and will be including a column in *Shuttle* to keep residents up to date on these changes. Indications suggest that approx £14.3m could be taken out of the Borough's economy due to changes in housing benefit calculation, the move to universal credit and the loss of Education Maintenance Allowance, on top of the cuts to public sector services at the Council, Police and health service.

### OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The campaign to support business growth and job creation in the borough is progressing well. Business buddies from the Department have now made 15 visits to local businesses to learn more about what they do but primarily to develop relationships, help with access to Council services, and signpost to advice and support. The first Business Surgery with Community & Business Partners (CBP) to meet with businesses in the round was held in November and was positive. Evergreen pipeline projects to access ERDF funding for regeneration continue in development with a focus on Whitebirk and the Knowledge Zone in Blackburn Town Centre.

### PAT ON THE BACK AWARDS

For the past couple of years, partners in the LPSB have funded the "Pat on the Back" award scheme, which recognises individual officers and teams who go the extra mile to help support and improve the lives of our residents.

Despite the challenging financial context, the Board have agreed that these awards will be run in 2012, as a means of thanking staff who have worked particularly hard over the past year.

Staff and teams from the following organisations are eligible to be nominated:

- NHS Blackburn with Darwen
- Blackburn with Darwen Council
- Capita staff working in and for the borough
- Third sector staff working in the borough
- Lancashire Constabulary staff working in the borough
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue staff working in the borough
- Blackburn College
- Lancashire Probation Trust
- Twin Valley Homes
- Volunteers

Winners and runners up will receive a pot of cash to spend in a way which demonstrates a clear benefit to the team or service awarded. Nominators, as well as the prize winners will then be invited to a special reception to recognise their achievements later in the Spring.

Nominations will be opening at the end of January/early February.

### LANCASHIRE LEP BOARD

A report on the findings and recommendations of the high level review of economic priorities across Lancashire was presented to the Board at its meeting in October and was endorsed. The report recognises that Lancashire is a diverse area with many centres, some of which are competing and also highlights that the LEP should try to narrow the gap between the more and less prosperous parts of the county, echoing what the PLACE partnership strive to achieve. Board Champions have been appointed for

priority areas identified in the report which includes raising the profile of Lancashire, inward investment, supply chain, skills and employment and business support.

The Board also put forward a proposal for an Enterprise Zone at BAE Systems Warton and Salmesbury sites which Government approved following BAE's job cuts announcement. Clearly Govt support to any initiative that attracts additional investment in the area is welcomed and the EZ will give a much needed boost to the wider area which has suffered a disproportionate amount of public sector funding cuts.

Lancashire has been allocated £12.89m of the Govt's £500m Growing Places Fund to address immediate infrastructure and site constraints to unlock jobs and housing growth. The Board have endorsed initial investment in three projects, including Burnley Bridge, with Whitebirk identified as one of the areas receiving first consideration for remaining funds. GPF is a revolving fund and priorities for future investment put forward will include Blackburn's Knowledge Zone Strategic Site.

### **RGF**

Pennine Lancashire has attracted £25m from RGF round 2, including £7.5m for Regenerate's 'Accelerating Business Growth' project which will be used to encourage investment and job growth in local companies. The project will create/safeguard 3792 direct jobs, 2000 indirect jobs and lever £31.4m private sector investment. Round 3 of the fund has now been announced and will open in February with £1bn now available upto 2015.

### **LANCASHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND**

An application for £16.5m ERDF funding is being submitted for Superfast Broadband across Lancashire. A mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify the number of businesses eligible for support which mainly focuses on SMEs or high growth firms in eligible sectors. It's estimated that 15,500 businesses across Lancashire will be eligible for revenue support, approx 6500 of which will also be eligible for capital support. These are mainly in the business and professional (47%) and advanced manufacturing (28%) sectors. Over two thirds of enterprises in Lancs would be eligible under the wider ERDF programme. An investment decision is expected in February 2012.

### **REFLECTIONS FROM POLICY COUNCIL**

I decided to take a very different approach to Policy Council this year, and rather than focusing on our historical performance and the things we have achieved in the past eighteen months, it felt necessary to make sure we were looking at the challenges we all know are coming over the next couple of years and more importantly, working out what, if anything we can do about them.

The debate at Policy Council was robust, but it was good to see a degree of consensus from all parties on the challenges facing Blackburn with Darwen which will ensure that we are doing everything we can to support our residents through these difficult times in 2012-13. We agreed the Council's vision, priorities and a total of 14 potential transformational projects, the details of which will be worked on during January and February 2012, with updates coming to Council in due course.

### **WHOLE PLACE COMMUNITY BUDGETS**

Blackburn with Darwen applied to become a whole place community budget pilot with Government, in November. Our expression of interest was very strong and demonstrated our track record and strength of existing joint initiatives, which clearly provided us with many advantages over other local authorities. However, despite being shortlisted to the final six, Blackburn with Darwen was unsuccessful in securing pilot status.

The successful pilots were announced on 21 December and include Cheshire West and Chester; Greater Manchester (AGMA); Essex and the West London tri-borough partnership (Hammersmith and Fulham; Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster).

The expectation of these pilots is that, by October 2012 they will have established an "operational plan" setting out how a community budget would be developed in their area. Government would then consider these operational plans in November 2012 and then feedback to areas, with possible implementation commencing in December 2012

#### **LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD 2012-2013 WORK PROGRAMME**

2011-12 has seen a range of activities delivered as part of the LPSB's work programme and the LPSB will meet in January for their annual review session. This session will look at what has been achieved this year and also consider what key projects need to be delivered during 2012-13, to help the public sector respond to the challenges it faces, whilst continuing to improve service delivery for residents of the borough.