

**REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****COUNCILLOR KATE HOLLERN****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING CHIEF  
OFFICER: GRAHAM BURGESS****DATE: 30 AUGUST 2012****YOUR CALL**

I am delighted to report that we continue to have an overwhelming response to our call for residents to help us, to help them make a real difference within their communities. We have also given residents the chance to speak about issues that matter to them through their local Ward Solutions meetings.

An example of such proactive consultation was a 'black cab video diary' that was parked in Blackburn and Darwen on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August. I attended on the day and supported 46 residents to fill in the feedback cards whilst a further 24 gave their comments to the 'cabcam'. The video-diary style comments will be made into a YouTube video and uploaded to the Council website later this month. More than 30 feedback cards were also taken away by residents to fill-in and return at a later date. I spoke directly to dozens of residents and took away several feedback cards with contact details to respond direct to residents' concerns/queries. I also gave a Radio Lancashire interview on the day giving details of the Your Call event and encouraging people to come along and give their views.

We will be building on the excellent work that our residents have undertaken, and working with them to address other key concerns such as littering; dog fouling and fly-tipping and we will be working with landlords to ensure that they keep their properties in good condition. Our Councillors lie at the heart of the campaign and will provide a key role in supporting community groups to make a real difference in the area they live.

**POLICE AND COMMISSIONER PANEL**

Elected Members will be aware of the upcoming election of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in November 2012. In addition to the election of the PCC, November also signals the creation of Police and Crime Panels (PSPs) which will be responsible for supporting, and holding to account an area's Police and Crime Commissioner. I am pleased to report that I was elected as Chair of the PCP for Lancashire. Building on our excellent partnerships with the Police locally, I feel that this provides Blackburn with Darwen with an opportunity to influence police and community safety strategy and investment across Lancashire, as well as providing a platform to express the experiences of our residents around policing issues.

**WELFARE REFORM**

A number of internal briefings are being held with members and other Council Departments on the abolition of council tax benefit and the introduction of a localised council tax support scheme. The main focus of the briefings is to raise awareness of the issue and get some initial feedback. Further sessions will be held during and after the formal consultation period.

A comprehensive consultation programme has now been agreed. All council tax benefit recipients, a percentage of council tax payers and representative groups will be canvassed for opinions on the Council's draft preferred scheme. The consultation will last for 12 weeks with a collation of views and opinions expected in November. Letters will be issued week of 6 August with a number of roadshows being held during August and September. This issue will also be discussed at ward solution meetings over the next few months.