

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS, HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES**COUNCILLOR Jan Virmani****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING DIRECTOR: SAYYED OSMAN****DATE: 1 November 2012**

GRIFFIN AREA REGENERATION There are 14 properties remaining to be purchased in the clearance area. To date 80 properties have been demolished in the regeneration area. Contractors are on site preparing a further 31 properties for demolition at 19-51 Coleridge St and 45-73 Hancock St.

EMPTY HOMES INITIATIVES Letters are being sent out to owners of 750 long term empty properties across the borough. Owners are invited to contact the council and discuss initiatives to bring these properties back into use. Working with our Registered Partner Twin Valley Homes (part of the Together Group) we are offering owners of empty properties options to either sell or lease the property to TVH.

TVH will then carry out refurbishment of the properties and offer them for resale (if purchased) or rent (if leased). To date 80 owners have responded seeking further information about the scheme. The letter also outlines the council's intention to pursue the enforcement route if owners are unwilling to bring their properties back into use.

ORCHARD GROVE The development of 95 new homes in Darwen is progressing well. 20 families have now moved into their new homes on phase 1 and the remainder are being offered for sale. Phase 2 (43 properties) is progressing well and scheduled for completion in March 2013. 19 reservations have been made off plan for properties on phase 2 and 3 properties on phase 3. For further information contact: Subhan Ali on (01254) 585768.

ASYLUM SUPPORT SERVICE UPDATE SERCO has commenced procuring properties in the private rented sector to house the asylum seekers. This process is subject to stringent checks by the Council to ensure that the locations are acceptable and that the overall number of asylum seekers is not increased. For further information contact Steve Richards on 585132

NEW INSULATION SCHEME A scheme to deliver insulation has started in the Sudell Ward in Darwen, as the properties in this area are difficult to insulate. The stone fronted properties have not been able to have their cavity walls insulated up until now. The authority is leading the way in developing the first large scale scheme of its type to offer a unique insulation solution to private house owners, involving the use of a structural foam material called Technitherm. The scheme is being well received. For further information contact Stuart Pye on 588890

RABIES EXERCISE The Public Protection Service is responsible for maintaining the Council's animal disease contingency plans, and has recently added a rabies plan. An exercise took place on 25th September to test this plan, involving the main internal and external partners who would be involved if rabies was found in the Borough.

ELECTRIC BLANKET TESTING Due to take place on 31st October at Blackburn Rovers. Organised by Age UK (previously Age Concern) and with support from the Fire Service and the Council's Public Protection team. Blankets are tested by a safety expert, and unsafe blankets are replaced as closely as possible with like for like new blankets at no cost to the consumer. Faults are recorded and reported back to manufacturers with a view to improving safety features.

LOAN SHARK EVENT The National Illegal Money Lending Enforcement Team is working closely with partners in the Borough to deliver a week of activities planned to publicise the work of the team in the Shadsworth estate. Trading standards officers, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, Jubilee Tower Credit Union, the CAB, the Welfare Rights Team and the Healthy Living Team are all planning to contribute to the week's activities commencing 12 November.

ADVICE SERVICES A report outlining the progress to date has been submitted to Executive Board. The report includes a service draft specification and outlines the possible consortia approach to delivering advice services in the future.

SOCIAL FUND A number of proposals and options in how the Social Fund is administered have been explored. The proposed approach for Crisis Loans is for the scheme to be designed around 'basic emergency needs' whilst Community Care grants continue to support vulnerable individuals and their families.

CCTV New 5 year SLA's have been agreed with both Hyndburn Borough Council and the Greenbank/Furthergate Business Improvement District.

ASB. A briefing was delivered to Members on 3rd October, with the presentation being sent out to members who were unable to attend. This is part of an initiative by the EHN Department to support Members understanding of key issues impacting on their neighbourhoods and how we may jointly be able to find solution.