

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS,
HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES****CLLR JAN-VIRMANI****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: SAYYED OSMAN****DATE: 31 JANUARY 2013****Community Learning Trust (CLT) Pilot.**

Visits from Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Evaluator for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) took place in November 2012. They were greatly impressed with the scope and quality of the work we are doing and with the impact that our work is having on deprivation in the borough. The SFA were particularly impressed with our ability to engage with citizens and learners in their personal development to access life improving opportunities.

Troubled Families Update

A model for delivery has been agreed based on the Family Intervention Programme. It includes the appointment of a key worker as the main contact with the family and any services delivered to the family. A target of 100 families has been set for the first year and to date 85 families have been identified. This corporate project sits in our three Shared Neighbourhood Teams and driven by the Neighbourhood Managers and coordinated by Tanya Gallagher, Troubled Families Programme Manager

Griffin Area Regeneration

The council has now purchased 151 properties, 14 remaining to be purchased in the clearance area. A total of 111 properties have been demolished in the regeneration area, these include the recent demolition of 31 properties at 19-51 Coleridge St and 45-73 Hancock St.

HCA First Round – To date around 120 owners in the Borough have registered their interest to offer their properties for sale or lease for refurbishment.

Empty Homes Cluster Bid – This project aims to bring 30 empty homes back into use on Queen St in Darwen.

Empty properties CPO'd by the Council – Thomas V Shaw, estate agents acting on behalf of the Council, has received substantial interest and offers to purchase 85 New Park Street and 363 Audley Range.

Orchard Grove

This exemplar development of 95 new homes in Darwen is progressing well. Phase 1 is now fully completed and accommodates 30 properties of which 21 are currently occupied. 18 reservations have been made on phase 2,

development is progressing well and scheduled for completion in early spring 2013. 4 reservations have been made off plan for properties on phase 3.

Shorey Bank

A number of developers have expressed an interest to bid for the Shorey Bank scheme, a developer day was held on 13 December. Tender documents are being sent out to all interested developers in early January. The Council hopes to deliver a substantial mixed tenure scheme for older people, including extra care and bungalow provision.

Selective Licensing Of Private Rented Properties Update

Following designation of the selective licensing scheme in Griffin a newsletter was sent out to all the residents of the area, all known landlords and estate agents. Notification of the designation was also published in the Lancashire Telegraph and the Citizen. The selective licensing scheme for Griffin comes into force on 18th January 2013. Application packs have so far been sent out to 34 landlords, owning a total of 103 properties within the area who have requested them.

Electric Blanket Testing The electric blanket testing event organised by Age Concern and staffed by the Public Protection Service took place at Blackburn Rovers on 31 October 2012. The event was well attended, with a total of 149 blankets being tested (up 50% compared with last year's event). Of the blankets tested, 66% were found to be faulty, and were replaced free of charge and so removing the risk posed by faulty blankets

Under Age Sales Under age sales enforcement is continuing to be prioritised by the Public Protection Service. By the end of December, seven alcohol test purchasing operations had taken place, with sales being made at 14 of the 88 premises checked (16% failure rate). In the same period five tobacco test purchasing operations have taken place, with sales being made at 5 of the 69 premises checked (7% failure rate). An operation to test purchase fireworks in the days before bonfire night resulted in one sale from 13 attempts.

Advice Services The review of Advice Services provided by the Council and the voluntary sector has now been completed. The preferred model for future advice services is to co-locate the Council's own team with the voluntary sector organisations. It is hoped this can be completed by March 2013.

Social Fund The design of the Crisis Loan element of the localised Social Fund is being undertaken in conjunction with a number of voluntary sector organisations. Crisis Loans will become basic emergency assistance and will include the provision of food and top up/crediting of heating and lighting accounts. It is hoped that the policy for Crisis Loans will be forwarded to the Executive Board for consideration in February.